

To what extent – and through what channels – did Margaret Thatcher influence the course of British politics in the twelve years following her resignation as Prime Minister in 1990?

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Note:

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Chapter 1:

Introduction to the dissertation

1.1: Question and three hypotheses

Margaret Thatcher was Britain's premier for an impressive period of 11 years and is probably the best known British premier since Winston Churchill.¹ Her fame can be said to be indisputably related to Britain's success in the very short Falklands War in 1982 and also her role as a state leader together with the American President Ronald Reagan and USSR President Mikhail Gorbachev in the late 1980s in their effort to introduce democracy in Eastern Europe; thus contributing to end the Cold War. According to Paul Sharp in *Thatcher's Diplomacy*, Thatcher acted as a potential 'third force' together with Reagan and Gorbachev in world affairs during the years 1987 and 1988.² Her reputation as 'the Iron Lady' originated in the USSR, and although this soubriquet probably was not intended as flattery, Thatcher used it as her trademark.

She won three successive general elections as leader of the Conservative Party, and she was subject to exceptional portions of both repulsion and acclaim. Some fundamental reforms were carried through by the Thatcher governments, which paved the way for extensive privatization in the public sector, a reformed tax system, limitations to the welfare state, weakened trade unions and a more assertive foreign policy. Apparently she became progressively unpopular because of two big issues that dominated British politics from the late 1980s: The introduction of the poll tax and the increasingly Eurosceptic view that Thatcher proclaimed in the House of Commons and abroad. Her dominant and abrasive personality made her many political enemies, since she did not hesitate to criticize or condemn her cabinet members in public. Several prominent ministers resigned during the years of her government, for instance Michael Heseltine, Nigel Lawson and Geoffrey Howe. Their resignations attracted publicity because of their ferocious attacks on Thatcher's policies. Howe's resignation speech in November 1990 prompted a party leadership challenge that eventually forced Thatcher to resign.

¹ Winston Churchill was prime minister 1940-1945 and 1951-1955.

² Paul Sharp, *Thatcher's Diplomacy* (Basingstoke, Hampshire: Macmillan Press Ltd., 1999, first ed. 1997), p. 243.

The term ‘Thatcherism’ is directly related to Margaret Thatcher, although it has been defined in several ways. The article “Thatcherism and the Conservative Party” by Paul Whiteley et al is cited in two short texts below:

Her approach has revolved around a number of themes – a belief in Britain’s greatness and the assertion of national interests, a prejudice against the public sector (at any rate in economic and industrial affairs), a backing for the police and the authorities in fighting terrorism and upholding law and order, a strong dislike of trade unions, a general commitment to the virtues of sound money, a preference for wealth creators over civil servants and commentators, and a support for the rights of the individuals to make their own provision for education and health.³

The quote illustrates Thatcher’s ideas and values that dominated her political view and policies. Thatcherism can be seen as a mixture of neo-liberalism and neo-conservatism; in other words it has many of the same characteristics as ‘The New Right’⁴. The successes of the Thatcher governments are debatable, which the next quote by Whiteley et al. illustrates:

The success of Thatcherism can be explained in factors which lie outside the theoretical concerns of spatial models of party competition, such as the weakened Labour party; the importance of leadership styles, particularly the appearance of decisiveness and conviction; and to a certain amount of good fortune, exemplified by the ‘Falklands factor’. Her final election victory as Prime Minister in 1987 was considerably aided by a pre-election manipulation of the macroeconomy.⁵

Politicians and scientists of today in the UK still discuss Thatcherism and what impact Margaret Thatcher had and still has on British politics today. Some claim that New Labour has adopted many policies that Thatcher introduced, so that Thatcherism still is in operation to a certain degree, at least, in the policies that Tony Blair and now Gordon Brown advocates.⁶ Another claim is that John Major, Thatcher’s successor, was a better Thatcherite than Margaret Thatcher herself ever was. The claim will be commented upon later.

From November 1990 she continued travelling overseas a lot – her popularity was still very high and she was giving lectures and speeches in the US, in several Asian countries and former East-bloc countries. Newspapers and TV broadcasts gave her extensive coverage, and her biting criticism echoed in the UK, wherever she travelled on the globe.

Shortly after her resignation Thatcher was very busy holding speeches all over the world and managed to write two comprehensive volumes of memoirs within five years. Her third book *Statecraft* was published in 2002. All her books attracted a lot of publicity when

³ Paul F. Whiteley, Patrick Seyd, Jeremy Richardson and Paul Bissell, “Thatcherism and the Conservative Party” in *Political Studies*, (1994), XLII, p. 195.

⁴ Robert Leach, Bill Coxall and Lynton Robins, *British Politics* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006. First published 1989), p. 96.

⁵ Whiteley et al, “Thatcherism and the Conservative Party”, p. 202.

⁶ Richard Heffernan, *New Labour and Thatcherism: Political Change in Britain* (Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave, 2001, first ed. 2000); Simon Jenkins, *Thatcher & Sons: A Revolution in Three Acts* (London: Penguin Books Ltd., 2007, first publ. 2006).

they were launched. Thatcher continued to represent her Finchley constituency until summer 1992, when she accepted a peerage and took a seat in the House of Lords. She participated in some debates and occasionally gave speeches there. There were frequent newspaper reports about her during the years since her resignation, and it seems that she managed to set the agenda through her often indignant or abrasive utterances.

Many organizations that shared her views about the EU or had a more general 'Thatcherite' ideology presented her with honorary offices. These organizations constituted a network of people with a political ambition to influence the general public as well as politicians and the media. Given her status as former world leader and her personality, it was to be expected that she wanted to continue to influence politics, even without the formal role as prime minister. After 15 years as leader of the Conservative Party and 11 years as prime minister, she enjoyed an extensive network of politicians, former and present state leaders, prominent leaders in various political organizations in addition to right-wing journalists and newspaper proprietors. These people shared the same political views and associated with each other, at least to a certain degree.

The broad spectrum of political activities that Thatcher undertook since 1990 has been studied to some extent in this dissertation. The research question which will be analyzed is: ***To what extent – and through what channels – did Margaret Thatcher influence the course of British politics in the twelve years following her resignation as Prime minister in 1990?***

The role of a former premier is not easy to define, or in some cases, to shape. The theme was briefly discussed by Kevin Theakston in his article "After Number Ten: What Do Former Prime ministers Do?" Thatcher's predecessor Edward Heath was bitter and launched attacks on Thatcher's policies in the House of Commons. A few former prime ministers have continued their political life in a less prominent position as an MP or a peer in the House of Lords. When Thatcher resigned as prime minister, she had to return to her seat as an MP and backbencher, since she was not invited to sit in John Major's cabinet. Theakston said: 'Thatcher was also unable or unwilling to play the role of the dignified, supportive, loyal-but-worried elder stateswoman, exercising occasional influence.'⁷ She had been in politics for so long, and she did not intend to occupy herself with anything else. Theakston also stated: 'Most ex-PMs seem to mellow with age, but as she got older, she actually got more

⁷ Kevin Theakston, "After Number Ten: What Do Former Prime ministers Do?" in *Political Quarterly*, Vol. 77, 4, p. 449 (2006).

ideologically radical and fundamentalist, playing a destabilising role in her party.’⁸ It seems that Thatcher wanted to pursue her political goals almost at all costs.

Several areas regarding British politics during the last two decades are interesting to examine closely. One area is the history of the Conservative Party, and why the party experienced such a defeat in the 1997 general election, after having been in power since 1979. Another area of study is party leadership; from John Major to William Hague, Iain Duncan Smith, Michael Howard to the present leader David Cameron. A third area is the party’s near division over Europe. The reasons for the party’s seemingly preoccupation with the European Union (EU) including the contentious issues of a single currency and referendum are presumably many.⁹ Another field to examine is how Margaret Thatcher attempted to continue her political life in the limelight without having the formal function as prime minister.¹⁰ These themes seem to be intrinsically connected.

The research question has led to the establishment of three different hypotheses which provide a backdrop for the empirical analysis. Hypothesis number one is that *Margaret Thatcher influenced the Conservative Party in general and the parliamentary Conservative Party both directly and indirectly*. The term ‘influence’ is discussed together with other key concepts and obviously these concepts are important to clarify. Leach, Coxall and Robins have interpreted the meaning of ‘influence’ to include the tacit or subtle ways of persuading people in order to shape their views in addition to the vocal and explicit form of persuasion.¹¹

It is vital to establish what constitutes the Conservative Party in Britain in order to discuss potential influence within the party as well as on the party. In the House of Commons the party leader plays an important role, especially when the party is in power. This dissertation attempts to prove how Margaret Thatcher contributed to change her successor’s policies in the House of Commons to become more Eurosceptical. Further, the thesis attempts to prove that Major was influenced indirectly by frequent attacks on his authority and decisions. The backbenchers were also presumably influenced by Thatcher to display disloyalty to the party and the party leader, which resulted in many rebellions against the government in important debates. This study attempts to prove Thatcher’s influence on the

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ The European Economic Community (EEC) changed its name to the European Community (EC) in 1965 and again to the European Union (EU) on 1 November 1993. In order to simplify matters, the EU generally used whenever the EC or the EU is discussed, although this is strictly not correct.

¹⁰ As a general rule in this dissertation, all titles describing party functions are not written in capital letters. Hence: party leader, chairman, prime minister, chancellor, and secretary of state.

¹¹ Leach, Coxall and Robins, *British Politics*, p. 5. See also ch.2 in this dissertation.

party programme and also how the annual party conference was influenced by her presence. Controversial statements may also have induced the party to policy changes.

Since Thatcher was very active outside Parliament after her resignation, a substantial study had to include other areas where political debates took place. She obviously attracted a lot of media attention whenever she travelled and gave speeches worldwide. This leads to hypothesis number two: *Margaret Thatcher influenced public opinion through her public appearances, books and articles*. The hypothesis is based on the assumption that public opinion is the opinion that is expressed publicly – it is the voice of the people. Arguably in a representative democracy the elected representatives in Parliament express the political views of the citizens of the country. The politicians make decisions on behalf of the voters. The electorate is entitled to express their opinion publicly, as participants in an open debate. Public opinion can be voiced through various channels, for instance in elections, in mass media or at public meetings. In this dissertation an event such as the annual Conservative party conference is regarded as public. It might be a contentious claim that public opinion is expressed by people who are not elected politicians. In this dissertation, however, this distinction is practical, although it is disputable. If a politician participates in for instance a televised debate, she arguably does so to influence public opinion.

Ideas and ideology can constitute an important part in public debate in addition to party manifestos. Andrew Geddes claims:

... ideas about the nation, the state and sovereign authority mattered intensely and were particularly evident in the period between Margaret Thatcher's Bruges speech of 1988 and the June 1995 leadership challenge to John Major, after which the Conservative government entered a period of stasis prior to their ejection from office in 1997. During this period government policy toward the EU remained fairly consistent with what had gone before. What changed were the tone and rhetoric with the emergence of a Eurosceptic critique. Ideas and the use made of them mattered.¹²

Since Thatcher's Bruges Speech in 1988, ideas and ideology apparently became more important in the Conservative Party, at least for the Eurosceptic MPs. Jim Buller discusses the impact of the EU-question in Britain in his book *National Statecraft and European Integration*.¹³ Currently there are discussions going on regarding the Europeanization of British institutions, and how the debates about further integration in the EU have affected Britain. It is a well established fact that these issues dominated the Conservative Party during

¹² Andrew Geddes, "Europe" in Kevin Hickson, ed., *The Political Thought of the Conservative Party since 1945* (Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), p. 114.

¹³ Jim Buller, *National Statecraft and European Integration: The Conservative Government and the European Union, 1979-1997* (London and New York: Pinter. A Continuum Imprint, 2000), p. 2.

most of the 1990s. Jim Buller emphasizes the need to clarify what institutions were affected, and he quotes researchers P. Hall and R. Taylor:

According to 'New Institutionalism', analysis of institutions encompasses more than dry, old constitutional studies of various organs of the state under review. Instead, this approach has increasingly called for the study of: 'informal procedures, routines, norms and conventions embedded in the organizational structure of the polity or political economy.'¹⁴

These discussions are relevant, but too comprehensive to be given a full analysis in this dissertation. The issues that Thatcher sought to discuss after her resignation, for instance a single currency or the Maastricht Treaty, did have an effect on the House of Commons and the House of Lords. The second hypothesis assumes that political influence can be exercised in several ways outside the traditional policy-making institutions outside Parliament. This idea leads to other potential areas of influence. Jim Buller quotes Jim Bulpitt when he describes 'the Court'. This is defined to be the 'the formal chief executive plus his/her political friends and advisers.'¹⁵ 'The Court' are acknowledged to be the most influential people governing Britain, in other words the prime minister and his/her cabinet in addition to the unelected advisers. The influential advisers can be academics or members of think-tanks and other groups.

Jim Buller has indirectly inspired the last hypothesis in this dissertation. The third hypothesis is: *Margaret Thatcher's indirect influence of right-wing think-tanks and Conservative or Eurosceptic organizations contributed to increased Euroscepticism in Britain in the 1990s*. There were a huge amount of different right-wing think-tanks and organizations that fought against the Maastricht Treaty, the single currency or for a referendum in the 1990s. In addition there were single-issue parties, like the Referendum Party and the UK Independence Party. Some of these organizations were explicitly Thatcherite or Eurosceptic. Thatcher and other Eurosceptic politicians in Parliament were members of several think-tanks or groups at the same time, which gave them an enhanced opportunity to benefit from a resourceful network of likeminded people with the expressed goal of influencing politicians and the electorate. Dennis Kavanagh discusses right-wing think-tanks in his book *The Reordering of British Politics: Politics After Thatcher*. He mentions a few names: Institute of Economic Affairs, the Adam Smith Institute and Centre for Policy Studies. It is quite possible that his examples better support his ideas about the right-wing think-tanks than the

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 6.

Thatcherite and Eurosceptic groups that have been studied in this dissertation. However, he claims that the functions of the right-wing think-tanks are:

1. Influencing the climate of opinion.
2. Reinforcing the instincts, values, and policy agendas of politicians.
3. Supplying a vocabulary for politicians.
4. Providing networks and mutual support.
5. Flying kites.
6. Supplying a take-off for a career in politics and government.¹⁶

These functions will naturally vary with the different group, but they might be true for most think-tanks in general. The fourth function listed here is especially interesting in this dissertation. Kavanagh's quotes Graham Mather, an interviewee, when he discusses his claim about networks. Kavanagh says:

The offices of the groups are located within a few square miles of each other in Westminster, close to Parliament, Whitehall, and Conservative Central Office. Regular lunches, seminars, and other social gatherings provide social and intellectual support for participants. ...Some of the key think-tank figures were appointed in Whitehall as advisers and were able to provide a direct input to policy. There has been a remarkable degree of overlap in the memberships of the boards and study groups and authors of the pamphlets of the various think-tanks. The close links between the activists have helped to develop what has been called 'a free enterprise solar system'.¹⁷

The activities that take place in the networks of think-tank employees are not easy for outsiders to observe. If people socialize with each other, it is conceivable that they have an opportunity to influence each other politically as well. Politicians who are related to different political organizations or think-tanks are presumably very interested to discuss political issues with others, although they do not necessarily only occupy themselves with serious political exchanges.

One issue that has become prominent for right-wing think-tanks in the 1990s is Europe, according to Kavanagh.¹⁸ Presumably their New-Right ideology clashes with the ideas behind the increased pressure for integration of the European Union members. Several conservative newspapers also supported the resistance to further integration within the EU. It can be claimed that the combined efforts of the Thatcherite groups and Eurosceptic editors and journalists gave them a substantial possibility to influence policy-making. This was some

¹⁶ Dennis Kavanagh, *The Reordering of British Politics: Politics After Thatcher* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), pp.160-163.

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 162.

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 167.

background to explain the research question and discuss the three hypotheses. The next part discusses the sources that have been studied.

1.2 Sources

There is a multitude of books written about Margaret Thatcher and her years in government, as well as about Thatcherism and the Thatcher legacy. Apparently few political scientists have attempted to study the broad range of Thatcher's political influence since 1990. The following authors have written about Thatcher's contribution to British politics after she resigned to a smaller or larger degree: Hugo Young in *This Blessed Plot*, Anthony Seldon in *Major: A Political Life*, John Campbell in *Margaret Thatcher. Volume Two: The Iron Lady*, John Sergeant in *Maggie: Her Fatal Legacy*, Dennis Kavanagh in *The Reordering of British Politics*, Norman Fowler in *A Political Suicide* and Stuart Ball and Anthony Seldon's edited book *Recovering Power: The Conservatives in Opposition since 1867*. These authors and books are discussed in some detail below.

The mentioned authors have different backgrounds and different motivations for writing about Margaret Thatcher. Hugo Young and John Sergeant are political journalists and as such might be inclined to write somewhat biased, often in a critical way, but not necessarily objectively. On the other hand, their observations can provide helpful analyses especially when seen together with a variety of other sources. Their books might offer credibility and verification alongside the more academic analyses, if they are used critically.

Norman Fowler was a member of Thatcher's government from 1979 and served in her cabinet from 1981 to 1990. He was also a chairman of the Conservative Party 1992-1994. The title *A Political Suicide* suggests that his opinion about the party is somewhat biased, and that he has a possible political agenda when he uses this title. On the other hand, his experience as a secretary of state and party chairman is quite unique and his book is very interesting because he has worked so many years close to Thatcher.

John Campbell is a political biographer, whereas Anthony Seldon and Dennis Kavanagh are presumably more objective in their analyses with their background as political scientist and scholar/historian. These authors have apparently spent a considerable amount of time doing thorough research, based on the number of extensive list of references. Campbell and Seldon present some information about Thatcher's political life after her resignation, and

they both have critical remarks about her. However, they also try to balance this in giving credit to Thatcher's achievements. Seldon's main focus is John Major's life in politics, and more than four fifths of the book deals with the time after 1990. Thatcher is one of several people who influenced Major's government negatively, and she played a very important part from 1990 to 1997. Campbell's book is devoted primarily to Thatcher's premiership. The last chapter is about Thatcher after her resignation.¹⁹

There are numerous books and articles that discuss the European issue, the deliberations over the Maastricht Treaty and the single currency in particular seen in relation to British institutions. Here Thatcher is mentioned occasionally, but the focus is primarily on the Conservative Party and cabinet ministers and how the different issues have been debated. Primary sources for this dissertation were Thatcher's books and speeches, in addition to John Major's autobiography.²⁰ During the years 1990-2002 she held nearly 150 speeches, so naturally a selection had to be made. The Thatcher Foundation has published all Thatcher's speeches that she gave and public statements that she made on the Internet. They have been categorised, presumably by Margaret Thatcher herself, as minor, major and key speeches. This study has focused on four of the 13 key speeches. In addition has the election rally speech in 2001 been included because of the publicity it attracted both before and after it was held. Three articles written by Thatcher that were published in newspapers and magazines have also been studied. Thatcher did not write a lot of articles, but these three are presumably those which led to most debate both in the Conservative Party and in the parliamentary Conservative Party.

It has not proven difficult to find secondary sources about Margaret Thatcher and the Conservative Party in general in addition to the ones already mentioned. The challenge was to find reliable sources regarding the third hypothesis regarding the think-tanks and Conservative organizations. The third hypothesis is based on the assumption that the different Eurosceptic and Thatcherite groups had overlapping memberships, and that several prominent Conservative MPs and peers supportive of Thatcher's Eurosceptic ideas were influential in more than one of these groups simultaneously. Consequently, it has been important to establish the membership from the 1990s and later.

In some cases the only available source about a certain group has been published by Wikipedia, which is not a totally reliable source for scientific research. However, when

¹⁹ Chapter 18, "Afterlife", consists of about 50 pages.

²⁰ Thatcher wrote three books after her resignation: *The Downing Street Years* (1993), *The Path to Power* (1995) and *Statecraft* (2002). Major's autobiography was published in 1999.

prominent politicians are identified as members or supporters of a legitimate policy community, presumably this information will quickly be corrected if it is found untrue by Wikipedia users, since it is a very popular source of information and measures have been introduced to ensure the validity of the information that is published. Some of the Thatcherite groups or think-tanks have published their own pages on the internet, which supposedly make them more trustworthy or reliable. Even so, it has been difficult to establish the exact date for the publication and author of a booklet or paper which has been published by the group (this is the case for the Bruges Group, for instance, relating to papers produced in the 1990s).

In other cases, the odd member of a group is mentioned by one author or the other – very seldom do authors produce lists that include all the members of a political group or organization. The exception is the ‘Fresh Start’ group which has been listed in Teresa Gorman’s *Bastards*. Some books have included lists of all the party rebels voting against the government in the Maastricht debates, although these lists may not be identical to the membership of the ‘Fresh Start’ group. Many Eurosceptic supporters of the Fresh Start groups were forced to vote for the government by the whips or did so for a number of other reasons.²¹ Thus, the number of rebels in any given vote would probably consist of fewer people than the total number of ‘Fresh Start’ sympathizers.

The sources which have been used in the research are basically books and articles published in newspapers and periodicals. Two particular libraries have briefly been visited in order to find material. The Conservative Party Archives at the Bodleian Library in Oxford hold leaflets and brochures that are not available anywhere else, issued by the Conservative Central Office (CCO), the Conservative Political Centre (CPC) and the Centre for Policy Studies (CPS) among others. The Newspaper Collections of the British Library situated at Colindale in North-London gives the researcher an opportunity to acquire a fairly detailed account of what went on in political life in the 1990s and later. Generally, the great majority of sources used for the study in this dissertation are not from Wikipedia, but rather more reliable sources written by acknowledged scholars and commentators.

1.3: Political science research and qualitative method

²¹ David Baker, Andrew Gamble, Steve Ludlam, and David Seawright, "Backbenchers with Attitude: A Seismic Study of the Conservative Party and Dissent on Europe" in Shaun Bowler, David M. Farrell, and Richard S Katz, eds., *Party Discipline and parliamentary Government* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1999), p. 76.

This dissertation has studied a broad spectrum of the British society over a period from 1990 to 2002, which is when Thatcher declared that she would not be able give any public performances due to bad health. Areas of study include the British political system and the Conservative Party, as well as Britain's relationship to the EU during the 1990s, therefore no policy area can be said to have been studied in great detail. The premiership of John Major was very important, but also the Conservative party leaders William Hague, Iain Duncan Smith and Thatcher's potential influence on them has been studied. Contemporary history and analyses of political development during the last two decades also constitute a part of the literature that has been studied.

Interviews or surveys could have provided very useful sources of information. Margaret Thatcher herself is suffering from Alzheimer's disease, so she is probably not able to discuss her political past activities at the time of writing. John Major and his successors as party chairman would have been very interesting sources to interview, as they presumably have firsthand experience regarding the former premier and her attempts to influence British politics. Other prominent Conservative politicians would naturally also have been valuable sources to interview.

Historians or political scientists studying Margaret Thatcher and the Conservative Party since 1990 have produced a considerable amount of articles and books. Historian E. H. Carr quoted Lytton Strachey in an article and said: '... ignorance is the first requisite of the historian, ignorance which simplifies and clarifies, which selects and omits.'²² This is hard to accomplish when there is a lot of material available about a certain topic. According to Charles R. Ragin one of the social research goals is to assess significance of empirical findings.²³ This implies that the conclusions will be incorrect if the data are of insufficient quality, have been wrongly interpreted or do not tap the theoretical concepts which they are supposed to measure. The more complex an issue is, the harder it is to carry out objective research. Ragin also states that the qualitative method should focus on a limited number of cases in order to acquire an in-depth study.²⁴ The study of Margaret Thatcher is undoubtedly only one case; on the other hand the number of different instances when she tried to influence British politics is high. Dennis Kavanagh and Anthony Seldon pinpoint the problems that the study of recent history entails in their book *The Major Effect*. They say:

²² E. H. Carr, "Ch. 1: The Historian and His Facts" in *What is History?* (Penguin, 1990, p. 14. Reproduced in the text collection *EAS 4500. Europeiske og amerikanske studier. Del 1 av 2*. Oslo: University of Oslo, July 2007).

²³ Charles R. Ragin, "Ch. 2: The Goals of Social Research" in *Constructing Social Research. The Unity and Diversity of Method* (Pine Forge Press 1994, p.51. Reproduced in the text collection *EAS 4500. Europeiske og amerikanske studier. Del 1 av 2*. Oslo: University of Oslo, July 2007)

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 52.

The writing of contemporary history labours under certain handicaps. These include lack of access to key documents, over-reliance on oral sources, a dearth of published literature and lack of perspective: only with the passage of time can the consequences of events be fully assessed.²⁵

The aim of the dissertation is to find out where Thatcher exerted influence and whether she was successful in influencing British politics. The issue of Euroscepticism in relation to Britain has been the theme for a number of books published in later years. If the field of study was narrowed down to one issue only, it might have produced more clear-cut conclusions. Jim Buller discusses the problems related to doing research on 'a subject with a broad analytical focus'. He refers to Jim Bulpitt in this discussion, and Buller says:

One immediate problem was that this type of analysis required a little knowledge about a lot. At the same time, it demanded some conception of how the various parts of this system were related and how these relations changed over time. When it is remembered that macro-analysis also necessitated that attention be paid to the external dimension, the need for theoretical parsimony became self-evident.²⁶

This dissertation is intended to give an overview of different policy fields where Margaret Thatcher exerted her influence. The study should also reveal some of the consequences of Thatcher's political influence on the Conservative Party, on Parliament, and on public opinion; although the scope of the discussions has to be rather limited with such a broad analysis.

1.4: Outline of dissertation

The three hypotheses are dealt with in three separate chapters. It is however, vital to discuss key concepts that are used in the dissertation question and related terms; for instance 'politics', 'influence', 'democracy' and 'power'. Included in the second chapter is also a brief look at the Conservative Party, the functions of the backbenchers and the party leader, since these functions are important in later discussions.

Chapter 3 is about Margaret Thatcher and her influence on the Conservative Party as well as in Parliament. Since her Bruges Speech in 1988, Thatcher had voiced her strong opposition to further European integration within the European Union. Britain had signed the Single European Act in 1985, but apparently Thatcher did not realize the implications of the stated aims for political as well as economic integration then. Before the Maastricht Treaty was signed in December 1991 by all the EU members, Thatcher protested against it in the

²⁵ Dennis Kavanagh and Anthony Seldon, eds., *The Major Effect*. (London: Papermac, 1994), p.x in the introduction.

²⁶ Buller, *National Statecraft and European Integration*, pp. 6-7.

House of Commons. She was joined in her vociferous attacks on the treaty during the ratification process that took more than one and a half years by likeminded politicians. The Conservative government had great difficulty in getting the treaty through both houses in Parliament, and the Conservative backbenchers rebelled several times and voted against their own government. Wincott, Buller and Hay wrote in an article about Thatcher: ‘... her hostility (and the conflict with Major) deepened in her maiden speech to the Lords on 2 July.’²⁷ Even though many voters did not find the issue of the EU of major importance, it gained momentum in the House of Commons. Wincott, Buller and Hay stated: ‘Where the rebels have had some impact is on changing the terms of political discussion, influencing the views of the Party and dragging the leadership along behind them.’²⁸ Thatcher encouraged and supported the Tory rebels, and they continued until the general election in 1997 to attack John Major and his government. She also voiced her support for the leadership candidates in the following two leadership contests, and contributed to negative publicity on party conferences and rallies.

Chapter 4 is about Thatcher’s activities outside Parliament and is related to several things: Speeches, books, articles and television interviews as well as newspaper reports. In order to narrow down the extent of material, only a limited number of speeches and articles were selected for a closer scrutiny. Thatcher’s books are very important. *The Downing Street Years* and *The Path to Power* are not only memoirs, but they also include Thatcher’s reflections on the current political situation mixed with harsh criticism. The third book *Statecraft* was Thatcher’s commentary on a few chosen topics. It sums up her experience as statesman. The chapter focuses on how Thatcher’s appearances affected public opinion and the Conservative Party.

Chapter 5 looks at several Thatcherite organizations and think-tanks that Margaret Thatcher had an indirect influence on. The chapter also takes a very brief look at the right-wing conservative newspapers during the 1990s and how they might have provided a sounding-board for Margaret Thatcher because of the proprietors’ increasing Eurosceptic attitude.

Finally, the concluding chapter sums up the empirical data gathered and evaluates whether the evidence can be said to prove the research question.

²⁷ Daniel Wincott, Jim Buller and Colin Hay, “Strategic Errors and/or Structural Binds? Major and European Integration” in Peter Dorey, ed., *The Major Premiership: Politics and Policies under John Major, 1990-97* (Great Britain: Macmillan Press Ltd., 1999), p. 98.

²⁸ Ibid., p. 99

Chapter 2:

British politics and political influence in general

This dissertation is about how Margaret Thatcher tried to influence politics since her resignation in 1990. It is essential to clarify some key concepts before examining how the former prime minister continued her political influence in Parliament and elsewhere. This chapter is a more general discussion of the terms politics and influence seen in relation to the British political system today.

2.1: What is politics?

Britain is a ‘developed’ country with a complex structure for how society is organized with political institutions on many levels to govern. Most people agree that they have to pay tax on their income in order to solve different certain important tasks that they need to co-operate on: taking care of the sick and the elderly, providing schools, transport systems, to provide law and order and many more. The task of the politicians is to decide how the generated revenue is to be spent for the benefit of all the inhabitants in the country. There are lots of different definitions of the term politics, and many can be worthwhile and true. In this text three different definitions are discussed in some detail.

Leach, Coxall and Robins defined a lot of key concepts in their book *British Politics*.²⁹ They say that politics is ‘about choosing between alternatives’.³⁰ They claim that the scope of politics has to do with the state, whereas the civil society has to do with a person’s private life.

Another definition of politics has been introduced by the Norwegian political scientist Øyvind Østerud, which is rendered in *Politics and Democracy*. Østerud’s definition is: ‘Politics includes all activity which is related to public decision-making’.³¹ According to

²⁹ Robert Leach, Bill Coxall and Lynton Robins, *British Politics* (Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2006).

³⁰ Ibid., p. 4

³¹ Gro Sandkjær Hanssen, Marit Kristine Helgesen and Signy Irene Vabo, *Politikk og demokrati: En innføring I stats- og kommunalkunnskap* (Oslo: Gyldendal Norsk Forlag AS, 2nd ed. 2007. First published 2005. My translation from Norwegian to English), pp. 27- 28

Østerud, this definition acknowledges that those who govern the country are influenced by the electorate in elections, by mass media, by political actions and demonstrations, by different political organizations and much more. In other words, the things which are conducive to form and change people's opinion, also contribute to the political policy-making. Feedback from the electorate plays an important role for the policy output.

Political parties compete before an election for the power to govern the country. Leach, Coxall and Robins define 'power' as 'the capacity to achieve desired goals'³². Dedicated politicians probably regard power as the ultimate aim for their party with the chance to improve society and to decide what aspects of society they want to give preference to. In a democracy, power in itself is not the only important criterion in order to get something done. Another criterion is that a person needs to be recognized as having the right to govern – in other words, he needs authority. Leach, Coxall and Robins define 'authority' as 'the rightful or legitimate use of power'³³. This concept is of great importance to a political leader of a party, and especially if the party has got the plurality of votes in the 'first past the post'-system in a general election in Britain. The leader must have the authority to lead, otherwise it becomes very difficult or near impossible. The concept 'legal-rational authority' is described as authority which is based on formal rules, as opposed to the other main types of authority in Max Weber's vocabulary; which are described as traditional and charismatic authority.³⁴

Sandkjær Hanssen, Helgesen and Vabo discuss the different dimensions of power, based on the work of Steven Lukes. They talk about 'visible power', 'agenda-setting power' and 'structural power'. Visible power is the easiest to observe and acknowledge, and is often related to certain jobs or functions. Agenda-setting power is exercised by actors in society that have the choice of what to highlight or discuss in public.³⁵ The role of mass media is here very crucial. People in general are not aware that journalists in radio and television have chosen what kind of news they present, what perspective they chose and what they have chosen not to say or discuss. Some newspapers are openly biased, whereas others presumably are neutral when it comes to party-political issues. Even the so-called party-political neutral papers can have a particular slant in their presentations, for instance due to the proprietor of the paper. The agenda-setting power is exercised by other 'operators' as well. Structural power is exercised in many ways, in the political institutions, in our physical surroundings, and also through our ideology and ideas that shape our conceptions about morality or

³² Leach, Coxall and Robins, *British Politics*, p. 5

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Hanssen, Helgesen and Vabo, *Politikk og demokrati*, pp. 31-32

society.³⁶ Our ideology influences how people interact with each other and also shape our public institutions.

A very short definition of power is: 'The ability to make people (or things) do what they would not otherwise have done.'³⁷ Lincoln Allison in *Oxford Concise Dictionary of Politics* also says: 'Power is often classified into five principal forms: force, persuasion, authority, coercion and manipulation.'³⁸ These forms include politicians' power as well as any individual's potential power that can be exercised in personal interaction with one or several individuals.

Leach, Coxall and Robins see authority and power closely related to the term influence and state: 'Influence involves the ability to shape a decision or outcome through various forms of pressure.'³⁹ They also add: 'influence suggests the ability to shape outcomes indirectly, to exert pressure on those who are taking the decisions, persuading them to change their opinion and behaviour.'⁴⁰ In other words, people who exert influence do not necessarily have the legitimate power to do so – they do not have the authority to initiate any action, but still they are able to contribute to the decision taken by the legitimate person or party in charge. Two examples that are described in later chapters can be mentioned here. In the years after her resignation as premier, Margaret Thatcher exerted influence on MPs in the House of Commons, by trying to persuade them to vote against the government. This happened after Thatcher had accepted her peerage in the House of Lords. An even better example is perhaps that Margaret Thatcher telephoned foreign secretary Douglas Hurd when she practically demanded that he should deploy British troops in Bosnia in the early 1990s. She no longer formally had any power to do this, but nevertheless acted as if she still had.

Hanssen, Helgesen and Vabo talk about two dimensions of politics in their recently published Norwegian book called *Politikk og Demokrati* (the translated title *Politics and Democracy* refers to this book in what follows). The first dimension is about deciding 'how to share scarce goods and even out burdens'⁴¹. The second dimension has to do with values or priorities.⁴² You can discuss what kind of welfare the state should offer for its inhabitants, or also what values should dominate the state-initiated services. This has been a theme for discussion in recent years in many countries, especially since the financial crisis that

³⁶ Ibid., pp. 33-34.

³⁷ Lincoln Allison, s.v. 'power' in Iain Mclean and Alistair Mcmillan, eds., *Oxford Concise Dictionary of Politics*, p. 425

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Leach, Coxall and Robins, *British Politics*, p. 5

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Hanssen, Helgesen and Vabo, *Politikk og demokrati*, p. 26.

⁴² Ibid., pp. 26-27

developed in the US in 2008. This crisis had implications for most of the world's countries to a larger or smaller degree, and the state's role suddenly became pivotal to companies and citizens that were facing bankruptcy and ruin. In the aftermath of this financial crisis several issues have been raised in public discussions, for instance: Is it legitimate for the state to spend money (revenue) to save insolvent private companies? Why should some companies be singled out to get extra support when others are left to fend for themselves? Elected politicians have to handle the crisis and it is a long time since the governments in industrialized countries have experienced such deep-rooted problems on a similar scale. In Britain the number of unemployed people soared because companies were forced to cut their expenses and politicians were faced with demands for money and initiatives to create new jobs.

It can be argued that the boundaries between the public and the private sphere are crumbling, and that many areas of society actually have a political aspect. One example illustrating this can be that consumers support the so-called Fairtrade companies that ensure that food and other products that are imported from other parts of the world are produced and manufactured with proper working conditions for people employed in those companies. Another example is that consumers consciously choose organic food that is produced without chemical pesticides or fertilizers. Customers who chose the more environmentally-friendly lifestyle can be said to exert some kind of political influence and they make a political statement if they buy certain products.

Another aspect of politics is to discuss how new ideas spread, or how people are influenced by political ideas. This was discussed in Dennis Kavanagh's book *The Reordering of British Politics*, where he said:

We do not know a great deal about how ideas germinate in the so-called policy communities of relevant officials, interest groups, and specialist commentators in a particular field, or how the climate of opinion influences decision-makers.⁴³

Kavanagh also referred to political scientist S. Finer and described how political influence is exerted through ideas. Here is a quote:

These included *irradiation*, through personal contacts at salons and clubs, *suscitation*, or stirring public opinion through the press, Royal Commissions, and parliamentary select committees, and *permeation*, through the appointment of sympathizers to commissions and committees.⁴⁴

⁴³ Dennis Kavanagh, *The Reordering of British Politics: Politics after Thatcher* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), p. 142.

⁴⁴ Ibid. Original emphasis.

Several of these possible channels for influence are discussed in later chapters. Many organizations work purposefully in order to convince people about specific issues. Several think-tanks and organizations were established in Britain in the early 1990s to avoid further integration within the EU. These are discussed in chapter 5.

2.1.1: The British polity

Politics and Democracy distinguishes between politics, polity and policies: Politics has to do with the discussion or deliberation about what action is needed, polity includes the system itself; where people have agreed that political decisions take place, and the term policies includes the results of the political discussions – the agreed plan for action and the formal laws that are made.⁴⁵ The British polity includes a variety of institutions and other meeting-places for people to discuss politics and exert their influence. The British polity thus consists of different political parties and Parliament (the House of Commons and the House of Lords), local government with elected councillors, elected representatives to the European Parliament and national assemblies for Scotland and Wales as well as a wide range of political organizations and interest groups. In addition there are other influencing factors that do not have formal power to make political decisions, but all the same contribute to discussion like traditional mass media and the new media channels like the Internet with the expansive growth of chat groups, Facebook, YouTube, Twitter and a myriad of similar online meeting places where people exchange views and influence each other. The traditional institutions have undergone big changes during the last decade, and the new forums for discussion transform the political landscape.

If British voters strongly disagree with their elected representatives they can also take part in political demonstrations, as many people did in 2003 when Britain decided to join the US in a military attack on Iraq to destroy their alleged weapons of mass destruction and to overthrow President Saddam Hussein. Some people exert their influence by directly writing a letter or an e-mail to the local MP expressing their concern or opinion; others join an action group to support a cause or to protest against something. There have been repeated actions against fox-hunting or against mink farms on the grounds of animal cruelty. The traditional

⁴⁵ Hanssen, Helgesen and Vabo, *Politikk og demokrati*, p. 27.

political parties have seen a rapid decline in membership in the last two decades in Britain.⁴⁶ Party-initiated activity has been replaced with other types of political activity related to single issues that people engage in. Parties may find that voters no longer are willing to support them whole-heartedly, and that they have to adjust in order to attract voters' attention. Political scientists talk about 'new politics' and 'issue-voting' which has replaced the traditional party politics and the tradition of voting for the same party for generations, which used to be the norm for most of the 20th century in Britain.⁴⁷ Many people have established their own blog on the internet, and although this does not need to be political at all, it is also a channel for some to express their political view to others.

Political influence might also be exerted through informal network. Business leaders, members of different clubs and societies that are not explicitly political, can still be very influential even though their activities are hidden to the general public. A politically interested business man or woman who ventures into politics is presumably very attractive to any club or organization with a political agenda, because he knows his way in the system and is expected to be able to 'pull some strings' – in other words, use his influence in order to achieve something for the company that he would not otherwise have been able to do.

Another concept that recently has been introduced is 'multi-level governance'. This includes a variety of factors that contribute to policy-making in Britain today.⁴⁸ There are many levels of governance and Parliament, think-tanks and mass media are included in this concept.

2.1.2: The British parliamentary system and democracy

The legal-rational authority in Britain is primarily exercised in Parliament. Britain is a democracy, which basically means that the inhabitants of the country have the right to decide who they want to govern the country, and that no-one can govern without people's consent. Britain is also a monarchy, but the formal powers of the reigning Queen are reduced compared to the powers of kings and queens centuries ago. The Queen's role is basically to be head of state and to summon the leader of the majority party after a general election in order to install a new government. A monarchy is in itself undemocratic, since the king or queen is

⁴⁶ Kavanagh, *The Reordering of British Politics*, p. 231.

⁴⁷ Hanssen, Helgesen and Vabo, *Politics and Democracy*, pp. 89-90

⁴⁸ Leach, Coxall and Robins, *British Politics*, p. 455.

not elected by the people but inherits the throne. Formally the Queen appoints the prime minister and ministers in the new government, and she also has a formal role in signing new laws that are made by Parliament. Most people seem to be in favour of retaining the monarchy as an institution, even though some claim it to be an anachronism – an outdated model which does not fit in a modern democracy.

The political scientist Robert Dahl defined the term ‘democracy’ as ‘a political system one of the characteristics of which is the quality of being completely or almost completely responsive to all citizens’.⁴⁹ His argument was that true democracy is hard to accomplish, and introduced the concept ‘polyarchy’, which is a modified version of a democracy.

Dahl stated that polyarchies are ‘regimes that have been substantially popularised and liberalised, that is highly inclusive and extensively open to public contestation’.⁵⁰ In his book Dahl focused on the vast majority of different groups that are influential in the decision-making in their claims to the politicians in a country like the United States. The politicians have to bargain with each other in order to agree on a policy. Elected representatives with formal power have to take into account the informal power of the un-elected groups and lobbyists in their policy making. The distinction between democracy and polyarchy is relevant in the discussion about political influence in Britain, and this is the theme for chapter 5, where different organizations and groups are looked at.

2.1.3: Different democracy perspectives

According to Sandkjær Hanssen, Helgesen and Vabo there are three main democracy perspectives, and they are: ‘competitive democracy’, ‘participant democracy’ and ‘deliberative democracy’.⁵¹ Competitive democracy is found in a state where elites compete to govern the country, and the electorate votes for the party that they think is best fit to do so. Participant democracy involves the electorate to a larger degree. Voters increase their understanding and skills through participating in democratic processes. Before political decisions are made nationally a whole range of different actors are invited to take part in ‘hearings’, where the effects of different policy alternatives are discussed. In a deliberative democracy policy-makers attempt to consider the minority’s views as well as the majority’s view. Traditionally, immigrants, poor, handicapped, and children have few elected politicians

⁴⁹ David Judge, *The Parliamentary State* (London, Sage Publications Ltd., 1993), p. 109.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Hanssen, Helgesen and Vabo, *Politikk og Demokrati*, p. 44

who represent their views. Many do not engage in party politics and they tend to be ‘forgotten’ in the elitist democracy, where the party who wins most votes represents the majority – and the majority of people are traditionally the most resourceful and are most likely to be heard in political debates. The deliberative democracy tries to make amends for the lack of representation in any legislative institutions.⁵²

2.1.4: The British Parliament

The British Parliament consists of two different bodies: the House of Commons and the House of Lords in addition to the sovereign. There are 646 elected politicians in the House of Commons, and the House of Lords has 669 peers in all.⁵³ Most of the policy-making takes place in the House of Commons, but the House of Lords has the power to veto a law or to suggest amendments to a law. Other functions are, according to Emma Crewe: ‘Holding the government to account, influencing policy, protecting the constitution and constituting the highest court of appeal’. The last function is now performed by twelve peers who are judges.⁵⁴ Tony Blair initiated a reform of the House of Lords in 1999 and the power and functions of the peers are still under some debate. Some want to abolish the House of Lords completely. The British electorate does not have a say in the election of the hereditary peers, so the House of Lords can be said to be fundamentally undemocratic.⁵⁵

The House of Commons is part of the parliamentary state. David Judge claims: “The importance of Parliament does not derive therefore from its ‘powers’ but from the very process of representation and the legitimation of government and governmental outputs flowing from that process.”⁵⁶ The elected politician represents the voters and their interests, and the rules ensure that the majority party has the right to govern. Consequently, if the leader of the majority party no longer has the confidence of the party’s representatives, he or she will have to resign. David Judge offers a quite nuanced definition of the concept ‘the parliamentary state’:

What the parliamentary tradition in Britain has been concerned with is the transmission of opinion between ‘political nation’ and governors, the controlling of government to the extent that governmental actions require the consent of the representatives of that ‘nation’, and the legitimation of changes of

⁵² Ibid., pp. 44-49

⁵³ Emma Crewe, *Lords of Parliament: Manners, rituals and Politics* (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2005), p. 2. The actual number of peers is slightly higher according to Butler and Butler, *British Political Facts Since 1979*, p. 99. Here the total number of peers is quoted to be 706 in 2005.

⁵⁴ Ibid., pp. 4-5

⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 2

⁵⁶ Judge, *The Parliamentary State*, p. 2

governors. These have been the essential characteristics of the British state and the reason why it warrants the title of 'the parliamentary state'.⁵⁷

Judge accents the legitimation of change. Government must be legitimate in the electors' eyes, and the representatives themselves must also stand the test of legitimacy within government. These are premises for the system of representative democracy.

Jack Brand in his book *British Parliamentary Parties: Policy and Power* claims that there is a distinctive difference between the Conservative and the Labour Party when it comes to the deference enjoyed the party leaders. Brand argues that leaders of the Labour Party often have been met with a somewhat hostile attitude from Labour MPs when the party has been in power in the House of Commons, whereas the Conservative Party leader usually enjoys less disruptiveness and tends to avoid open confrontation with Conservative MPs in Parliament. Jack Brand's observation does not seem to be valid if you examine House of Commons debates after the general election 1992. The alleged 'assumption of consensus' seems to have deserted the party since then. Jack Brand also states that 'the potential for factionalism and open internal argument in the two parties is quite different.'⁵⁸ Again, this seems to have changed during John Major's governments especially from 1992 to 1997. This is the theme of chapter 3 in this dissertation.

One important aspect of the House of Commons is the election and function of the select committees. An MP can opt for sitting in a committee that works with an issue that the MP has an interest in. Every department has its own select committee and the chairmanship is an elected position together with other functions, which you have to compete with others to get. A select committee is 'a legislative committee which deliberates upon complex issues and/or scrutinizes the executive on issues broader than legislation', according to Jonathan Bradbury in *Oxford Concise Dictionary of Politics*.⁵⁹ The committee's composition reflects the strength of the different parties in the House of Commons, and it is supposedly non-partisan. However, these committees have been influenced by the whips' wishes to some degree, Bradbury argues. There have also been claims that MPs who have rebelled against the governing party are excluded from the select committees. There were 34 different select committees at work in the House of Commons in 2007.⁶⁰ Select committees have quite a lot of influence on the policy-making because they define the premises for new laws to be

⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 6

⁵⁸ Jack Brand, *British Parliamentary Parties* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), p. 39.

⁵⁹ Jonathan Bradbury, s.v. 'select committee' in Iain Mclean and Alistair Mcmillan, eds., *Oxford Concise Dictionary of Politics*, p. 478

⁶⁰ Ibid.

proposed or for old laws to be abolished. Already in 1958 W. Bagehot commented on the importance of the select committees, and said: 'The elective is now the most important function of the House of Commons.'⁶¹ The select committees seem to be of relatively high importance today, although their membership is not often a feature in media coverage.

It is quite difficult to prove any attempt to influence policy-making, or 'pressure group intervention,' because it can be an informal conversation or a meeting in the lobby. Different sources might try to influence politics, and even though it is relatively easy to establish that a politician has changed his mind on a subject over time, it is a much more demanding task to decide why this happened. A rebellion against a government proposal is not necessarily the result of pressure group influence.⁶² Generally there are disparate factors at work simultaneously. Both MPs and possibly also peers receive a lot of attention from pressure groups representing different parts of the country. Jack Brand described in his book *British Parliamentary Parties* a study that highlighted attempts to influence backbenchers' decisions from pressure groups from 1959 to 1990. The study was carried out by two scientists covering different time spans and apparently, in Brand's words '... there is a relation, not only between pressure groups and departments, but also, on several occasions, between pressure groups and backbenchers.'⁶³ Brand added:

In 14 out of the 19 examples on the Conservative side, the interventions were successful. Working with MPs of the governing party seems to have been very worthwhile. Many of these cases concerned the National Farmers' Union and the runner-up was the Confederation of British Industries.'⁶⁴

Apparently several pressure groups enjoyed access to politicians in Parliament also after Margaret Thatcher resigned. Thanks to the mandate of the different select committees, groups are invited to the House of Commons to present their views on different matters and thus take part in the policy-making by doing so. Parliamentary consultants represent many different interests, both firms and private organizations. This potential influence is examined in some detail in chapter 5.

⁶¹ Brand, *British Parliamentary Parties*, p. 14.

⁶² Ibid., p. 94

⁶³ Ibid., p. 106

⁶⁴ Ibid.

2.2: Power in Britain: different perspectives and models

The British polity and the different alternatives that exist for people to influence politics have been briefly discussed earlier. It is necessary to highlight a few other key concepts as well. The concepts 'elite', 'the establishment' or 'the ruling class' are used to describe people who have political power in Britain. Some claim that there is a fairly small number of people who actually have most authority to govern the country, in other words they constitute an elite. Even though Britain is a democratic country, there are relatively few who actually get the chance to involve themselves in government.⁶⁵ The 'establishment' is a somewhat deprecating term about people with an affluent family back-ground and a superb education from one of the top universities who are seen to dominate most of the British governing institutions.⁶⁶ This would probably also include civil servants that seldom are named in public discussions, who can be quite influential as well. Marxists talk about the ruling class, which is defined as people who have political power as well as money and property, in other words economic power. This category includes business leaders, directors of big corporations and companies. Marxists claim that people belonging to the working class are excluded from power because they are poor. Leach, Coxall and Robins claim that in a capitalist society the ruling class 'is in a strong position to influence or condition the thinking of the subordinate classes, through for example the education system and the mass media', seen from a Marxist perspective.⁶⁷

British society changes over time as do the actors who have power. Journalist Anthony Sampson has studied the development in Britain from 1962 to 2004 regarding who has power. He found that the power seems to have been restricted for the previously powerful trade unions and former independent university teaching staff. Members of cabinet and civil servants also seem to have less influence, while the prime minister has become more powerful. Sampson thinks the role of the media has been enhanced over the years. This observation is not a scientific study, but it might still prove to be quite correct.⁶⁸

There are several models on British society today that take into account the influence of other actors than the formal institutions. The pluralist model looks at the importance of pressure groups. Pluralism is 'a theory of society as several autonomous but interdependent groups'.⁶⁹ Not only do you have many powerful actors, but they also rely on each other. The

⁶⁵ Leach, Coxall and Robins, *British Politics*, p. 8

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid., p. 11

⁶⁸ Ibid., p. 9

⁶⁹ *Collins The Times English Dictionary & Thesaurus* (HarperCollinsPublishers & Times Books, 2nd ed. 2000. 1st ed. 1993), p. 904.

neo-pluralist model emphasizes that even though power is distributed on several actors, some are more important than others. Business can for example represent a key interest with a lot of power.⁷⁰ Democratic elitism is a third model which is a modification of the elite-term.

According to this, the democratic perspective is safe-guarded because the different parties compete in elections, and the voters give the parties a mandate to govern on their behalf.⁷¹

Leach, Coxall and Robins claim that politicians that were associated with the New Right would emphasize the power of the free market and the individual's power to choose, rather than the power of a collective group. Producers and consumers should have most power and the state as limited power as possible. Those who inspired the thoughts of the New Right in Britain were among others Adam Smith, Friedrich von Hayek and Milton Friedman.⁷² The free market ideology was important in Thatcher's governments and led to for instance privatization of nationalised industries, tendering of public services to achieve better value for money and the pronounced aim of cutting taxes as well as reducing public spending.

The concepts that are used to describe a society depend on the political views, or ideology, of the person or scientist who studies it.

2.3: Pressure groups and lobbying

In the US professional lobbyists who represent hundreds of interest groups are recognized as both inevitable and somewhat problematic. If an interest group with strong financial backing actually wins political support for its case, you can discuss whether this is fair to the other interested parties or groups who are not so financially strong – in other words whether it is democratic.⁷³ Kernell and Jacobson in *The Logic of American Politics* discuss the claim that 'successful lobbying subverts the basic principles of democratic equality and majority rule.'⁷⁴ Britain has had pressure groups for a long time, and David Judge claims that their importance was 'rediscovered' in the 1950s. Even so, in Judge's opinion, pressure groups' influence on Parliament have not been properly been taken into account in discussions about pluralism during the last decades.⁷⁵

⁷⁰ Leach, Coxall and Robins, *British Politics*, p. 9

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Ibid., p. 10.

A. Smith (1723-1790) was an economist and philosopher. M Friedman (1912-2006) was an economist. F. Hayek (1899-1992) was also an economist.

⁷³ Samuel Kernell and Gary C. Jacobson, *The Logic of American Politics*. (Washington, CQ Press, 2006, p. 506)

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Judge, *The Parliamentary State*, p. 110

Political scientist S. E. Finer talked about the ‘law of inverse proportion’ that could be used to describe an escalating level of co-operation between different public and private interests in the 1950s.⁷⁶ Some groups had access to civil servants in Whitehall and worked out secret deals for the benefit of these groups. Groups that sustained a unique relationship with the bureaucrats did not have to go through the elected politicians in order to be successful.

Another scientist, Keith Middlemas, described the ‘corporate bias’ that existed between politicians, trade unions and employers’ associations in 1979. These lobby groups became very closely linked to the government and took on a new role as ‘governing institutions’.⁷⁷ Then during the governments of Margaret Thatcher corporatism was phased out for the benefit of an enhanced role of Parliament. The importance of the trade unions and the Confederation of British Industry (CBI) was reduced during the 1980s.

Judge refers to teachers and doctors who were organized in their respective policy communities that failed to be heard by the Tory politicians in the 1980s under Thatcher. These policy communities tried to organize petitions, rallied in the lobby of the House of Commons and wrote letters, all to no avail. Presumably several policy communities have had quite a considerable political influence in Britain, especially since 1990. Some of these communities have been organized outside Parliament, with a parallel group in the House of Commons. Other groups were extra-parliamentary, but were still dominated to a large degree by former and present politicians (MPs and peers alike). Their main aim has been to have a political influence directly on the House of Commons.

2.4: The Conservative Party

2.4.1: The Conservative Party leader

The leader of the Conservative Party does have a very influential role when it comes to leading the party and deciding its policies. When the party is in majority, the party leader appoints the members of his cabinet as well as the party chairman, who is in charge of the Conservative Central Office and the Advisory Committee on Policy, which has monthly meetings. This constitutes the party ‘head-quarters’. When the party is in opposition, the party leader appoints the shadow cabinet (also called the leader’s consultative committee). Jack

⁷⁶ Ibid., p. 112

⁷⁷ Ibid., p. 114.

Brand says: ‘Among the Conservatives, the Leader is the fount of policy.’⁷⁸ William Hague (party leader 1997-2001) introduced a reform which gave the party members some more power when it comes to party leader elections. Since 2001 the extra-parliamentary party has had a say when the number of proposed contestants had been narrowed down to two candidates,⁷⁹ whereas previously the leader was elected by MPs only. Jack Brand claims that the Conservative Party tends to treat its leader with more respect than the Labour Party. ‘The crucial difference between the parties seems to be the greater stability of loyal support for its leaders on the Tory side,’ Brand claims.⁸⁰ Recent parliamentary history might prove that this has changed during the last two decades.

2.4.2: The role of the backbenchers and the party whips

Two other aspects need some scrutiny as well when it comes to the Conservative Party: The role of the backbenchers and the Conservative peers. When the party is the governing party, the MPs on the front benches in the House of Commons constitute the government, including the members of cabinet. The backbenchers constitute the 1922 Committee, which also is in charge of the party whips. When the party is in opposition, all Conservative MPs except the party leader belong to the 1922 Committee. When the Conservative Party is in charge, the role of the whips is especially important. The 14 party whips have to try to secure that government proposals acquire the majority of votes in the House of Commons, and they produce a weekly document where they indicate the importance of the different divisions that MPs have to participate in. A three-line whip is the most important and then MPs are expected to be there and cast their votes, preferably to support the government if the Conservative Party has initiated the proposition. David Judge says about the 1922 Committee:

It has developed into a relatively sophisticated conduit for the articulation and transmission of information between backbenchers and party leadership, as well as an incisive surgical instrument for amputating the careers of those leaders whose policy programmes fail to secure, or threaten, electoral support.⁸¹

In other words, a party leader depends on the support from the backbenchers. The 1922 Committee is crucial in its role of mediator between the front-benchers and backbenchers. No

⁷⁸ Brand, *British Parliamentary Parties*, p. 106 (capital letter in the quote).

⁷⁹ Leach, Coxall and Robins, *British Politics*, p.118.

⁸⁰ Brand, *British Parliamentary Parties*, p. 42

⁸¹ Judge, *The Parliamentary State*, p. 84

leader will survive any prolonged dispute with the backbenchers. The whips have traditionally been rumoured to also play a crucial role for the future careers of the backbenchers. Those MPs who rebel and vote against the whips' instructions may not be proposed for advancement in the next cabinet reshuffle. The whips are rumoured to resort to both cajoling as well as threatening behaviour in order to provide the requested result. Party discipline is not necessarily easy to achieve – which has been illustrated quite frequently both before and after 1990. However, many commentators have pointed at the high number of rebels in various divisions during the Major governments in the 1990s.⁸²

Until 1997, the whips also had an influence on the choice of party leader. The chief whip would receive proposals for a new leader from MPs and with ten per cent backing the leadership contest would be initiated. Since 1997, the officer in charge of instigating the election for a new party leader is the chairman of the 1922 Committee. The new rules introduced by Hague had set a minimum of 15 per cent of the MPs to back the demand for a new leader.

The role of the backbenchers has been disputed for several hundred years,⁸³ and how they see themselves has certain implications for how they behave in the House of Commons. One role is the backbencher as a representative or a delegate: He has to vote on behalf of the people who elected him or her. If he is a Conservative Party representative, then he is obliged to vote with the party irrespective of his own personal conviction. The opposite role is to see the backbencher as a trustee. The elected MP has to vote according to his conscience and personal opinion. He has to take decisions based on careful consideration of any matter that is up for discussion and is free to vote as he sees best. According to Judge, this is actually how many MPs saw their role in the 1990s.⁸⁴

This view almost makes the party superfluous. Any MP who takes the role of trustee and who feels strongly about an issue is probably willing to disregard the party whip and vote for what he feels is the best option. The Conservative Party decides its policy through careful deliberation in order to determine its manifesto before a general election. The mandate of a Conservative MP in relation to the party's manifesto and how the voters see the mandate of a Conservative MP are issues that have been raised for instance in connection with the repeated rebellions during John Major's governments, especially from 1992 until 1997. The reaction in the constituency regarding an MP who rebels in Parliament is not always the same. In some

⁸² David Baker and David Seawright, eds., *Britain For and Against Europe: British Politics and the Question of European Integration* (New York: Oxford University Press Inc., 1998), p.34.

⁸³ Judge, *The Parliamentary State*, p. 201. Judge refers to politician Edmund Burke (1729-1797).

⁸⁴ Ibid.

cases an MP gets deselected, which means that the MP is not selected to represent the constituency at the next general election. However, this is necessarily not always the outcome. It might depend on several circumstances, for instance whether the MP rebelled in support of a certain local interest or whether the MP has kept in touch with his local constituency by frequently visiting the local party workers.⁸⁵ These local considerations are important and might oppose the whips' wishes for disciplinary measures to be taken. The infamous 'Whipless Nine' were not deselected after their frequent rebellions in the 1990s, and their position in the Conservative Party seemed to be strengthened when they lost the whip.⁸⁶ This is discussed in a later chapter.

If backbenchers strongly disagree with their party leader and actually vote against the party in an important division where the whips have claimed the urgency of support for the party, they know that the result may lead to a vote of confidence in the government and the claim for a new general election if the party does not have support from at least the majority of MPs. This is the ultimate choice that backbenchers face. The result might be that their party is voted out of power and the backbenchers who are responsible for an election defeat might lose their seats. However, the disagreement and the discussions that take place in Parliament are essential parts of the parliamentary system. Political scientist B. Crick argues that the electorate together with the backbenchers constitutes an important feed-back on the government. By reporting the discussions that take place, government is kept in check by the backbenchers. Parliament is a 'forum of publicity'.⁸⁷ The electorate can withdraw their mandate to the party if they are unhappy with the performance of their MPs. The politician William Gladstone (1809-1898) explained the function of the House of Commons: 'Your business is not to govern the country, but it is, if you see fit, to call to account those who govern it.'⁸⁸

Philip Norton differentiates between 'policy-making' and 'policy-influencing' institutions in different countries, and states that the British Parliament 'has a reactive and thus largely policy-influencing role',⁸⁹ according to Jack Brand. These are the activities of legislatures, in Brand's words:

⁸⁵ George Gardiner was deselected in his constituency in 1996 because of his involvement with the Referendum Party and the European Foundation. John Gorst withdrew his support for the Conservative Party in 1996 because the Conservative Party did not support a casualty ward at the hospital in his local constituency. He was not deselected. See Jack Brand, *British Parliamentary Parties*, p. 9

⁸⁶ Eight MPs lost the whip, or the membership of the parliamentary Conservative Party, and the ninth MP resigned the whip to show his support to the whipless.

⁸⁷ Brand, *British Parliamentary Parties*, p. 10.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p.12

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p.16.

Preparing and introducing legislation;
Modifying legislative proposals introduced by the executive;
Scrutinizing the performance of the executive in general;
Dismissing an executive or member of an executive who does not stand up to this scrutiny;
Recruiting new leaders from its own ranks or, in some cases, from elsewhere;
Bringing problems and injustices to the attention of government and public;
Bringing the opinion of the public or a significant section of the public to public discussion;
Legitimation, upon which the other functions depend.⁹⁰

The key word is legitimation. Without this, the whole institution becomes undemocratic and worthless.

Jack Brand argues that the role of a Labour backbencher is different than the role of a Conservative backbencher. This has to do with network and the hidden influence on the Tory MPs who traditionally have been recruited to a political career in the House of Commons. Even though this is not necessarily true today, it seemed to be true to a certain extent until recently. Many MPs had gone to prestigious public schools and universities or that they were born into families with high-ranking positions as business leaders, military careers or leading jobs as lawyers, bankers or company directors. A Tory MP traditionally came from a more affluent family that often had enjoyed the powerful network for generations. Brand claims that this background influenced the way people behaved as backbenchers, and that an MP with influential network background expected to be listened to and respected for his opinion, whereas a Labour MP without this network was treated differently and consequently did not have the same expectations of being taken seriously as his Tory colleague.⁹¹ This argument says something about the perception of Britain as a class-divided society, and there have been claims that class is no longer so important when it comes to how people vote and how the parties define their policies. However, even though distinct class divisions are less significant today, it seems that networks still play an important role, both in politics and in private companies in general. This is the theme for a later chapter of this dissertation.

2.4.3: The Conservative peers

Tory peers are presumably regarded as subordinate politicians who seldom cause any rebellions in the House of Lords. This is not always the case. D. Shell and A. Adonis who studied how Conservative peers voted in the 1980s claim that

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Ibid., pp. 40-41

... in the 1979-83 Parliament the large Conservative majority seems to have encouraged Tory Peers to be particularly critical of their own side. ... In the first year of the next Conservative government alone, Shell identified twelve major defeats of the government in the Lords.⁹²

Political scientist Jack Brand thinks that this is somewhat sensational and distinctly different from what had been observed before Margaret Thatcher became Prime minister. One reason for 'allowing' Tory rebellions in the House of Lords could be that towards the end of a parliamentary session time is very limited and this might explain why Conservative peers were not reprimanded. However, another factor that might influence the rebellions is that it was seen fairly harmless to protest when the party had a large majority in the House of Commons.⁹³

2.5: Conclusion

Politics is about 'who gets what, when and how,' according to the American political scientist H. Lasswell.⁹⁴ Power is closely related to authority and influence. The British polity includes all the formal institutions as well as other influencing factors. There are several models that explain how power is distributed, and they might all say something which is right about Britain today. The pluralist model acknowledges the influence of pressure groups, and the elitist model emphasizes the hidden network that exists due to education and affluence. The market model's ideology highlights the individual's power to produce and consume, and that the government's role is to carry out the fundamental duties, but to limit this as much as possible.

The politicians in the House of Commons and the House of Lords have different possibilities to influence politics. When a party has a majority, the backbenchers of this party fulfil the important role of legitimizing the government. If backbenchers refuse to support the party, the party leader faces a legitimacy crisis and might lose a vote of confidence. This leads to a new general election if the party does not win enough votes. In the case of election defeat, the backbenchers might lose their seats in the House of Commons. The House of Lords underwent a big reform in 1999, which reduced the number of peers and almost abolished the hereditary peers. Studies of British society in the 1980s and 1990s seem to have ignored the influence of pressure groups or policy communities, according to political scientists David

⁹² Ibid., p. 17

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Leach, Coxall, Robins, *British Politics*, p. 4.

Judge and Jack Brand, as well as the actual influence of backbenchers that are members of the governing party when it comes to influence policy-making in the House of Commons.⁹⁵

Chapter 3:

How Margaret Thatcher influenced Parliament and the Conservative Party since 1990

3.1: *Backbenchers and peers: How politicians and debates were influenced*

3.1.1: Thatcher in the House of Commons

Just a few weeks after moving into 10 Downing Street, Thatcher accused Major of ruining several of her accomplishments.⁹⁶ This accusation was repeated in March 1991 on American television as well, when Thatcher claimed that her efforts were now being undermined by Major's centralisation of power in Whitehall.⁹⁷ Thatcher's unease with her successor was due to disagreement regarding the appointment of Michael Heseltine as environment secretary, the abolition of the poll tax and a new approach to Europe.⁹⁸ Maybe it was the sudden dethronement as a leader that made Thatcher so intent on voicing her concerns. Talking about her forced resignation in a TV series on BBC in 1993, she described it as 'treachery with a smile on its face.'⁹⁹

On 28 November 1990 Britain had a new prime minister, and a former premier who did not look forward to a quiet life as back-bench MP in the House of Commons. 'Retirement was not an option,'¹⁰⁰ she said. Even though she was 65 years old, she definitely wanted to continue working. She was a 'political animal'; being used to working long hours with little sleep and hardly anything else than politics on her agenda. Realizing that she was no longer the nation's leader, it seems that she hoped to exert influence on the new prime minister. She

⁹⁵ Judge, *The Parliamentary State*, p. 110 and Brand, *British Parliamentary Parties*, p. 106

⁹⁶ Ian Gilmour and Mark Garnett: *Whatever Happened to the Tories: The Conservative Party since 1945* (London: Fourth Estate Ltd., 1997), p. 352.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 353.

⁹⁸ Anthony Seldon: *Major: A Political Life* (London: Phoenix Paperback, 1998), p. 252.

⁹⁹ John Campbell: *Margaret Thatcher. Volume Two: The Iron Lady* (London: Vintage, 2008), p.738.

¹⁰⁰ Margaret Thatcher, *The Path to Power* (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, Inc., 1995), p. 465.

talked about being ‘a good backseat driver’ at the time of the second leadership ballot.¹⁰¹ John Major had served in Thatcher’s cabinets as chief secretary to the treasury, foreign secretary and chancellor of the exchequer since October 1989.¹⁰² Thatcher supported him in the second round of the leadership challenge against Douglas Hurd and Michael Heseltine. She probably expected him to lead the country much the same way as she had done; he was her protégé and believed to be a right-wing politician.¹⁰³ John Campbell claims that Major not necessarily won the leadership challenge for being the best qualified to serve as prime minister. Willie Whitelaw, for instance, did not see Major as a Thatcherite, but thought that many others did.¹⁰⁴ Several MPs that had voted for Thatcher in the first round were persuaded to vote for Major, not least by Thatcher herself.

She had many loyal supporters, both in the parliamentary party, as well as among the electorate. Thatcher was aware of the devastating effect that her criticism could have on Major – she herself had experienced attacks on her policies when she won the leadership challenge over Edward Heath in 1975. John Campbell argues that her attacks on Major were more harmful, since she still had a lot of support in the House of Commons after 1990. The embittered attacks from Heath on Thatcher’s government in 1979 did not achieve the same effect as Thatcher’s more potent criticism in 1991 and later. Her popularity with many Conservative MPs could be said to give her the mandate to continue her criticism, and many of her supporters were eager to see to that her policies were carried through, even though she was no longer in charge.¹⁰⁵

It seems that Thatcher was regarded almost an icon to some people. She had many qualities of a strong leader; she had led the country to victory in the Falklands War against Argentina, and she had established strong measures to curb inflation and strengthen economy. She was the first woman to lead the Conservative Party, and she had been one of the very few female state leaders in the world. Her achievements during eleven years as prime minister had been outstanding, and many MPs felt that she had been stabbed in the back in the leadership contest. Maybe her strong personality was also a trait that her supporters found admirable – she never hesitated in saying anything, even though it might be harshly delivered and

¹⁰¹ Hugo Young, *One of Us* (London: Pan Books, 1993), p. 593.

¹⁰² Formally the mentioned title should have been written with capitalized first letters.

¹⁰³ Campbell, *Margaret Thatcher*, pp. 744-5

¹⁰⁴ Kenneth Baker, *The Turbulent Years: My Life in Politics* (London: Faber and Faber Ltd., 1993), p. 396. Willie Whitelaw had served as home secretary and deputy prime minister to Thatcher.

¹⁰⁵ Campbell, *Margaret Thatcher*, pp. 750-751.

perceived. Peter Hennessy described her ‘A Tigress Surrounded by Hamsters.’¹⁰⁶ She had a very strong will to have her way, and she expected people to be well prepared to voice opposition. Characteristically she could be impatient and extremely rude if someone did not express himself clearly.¹⁰⁷

Her preoccupation with justifying her own actions and denouncing Major’s efforts can seem to be one of several reasons for her repeated attacks. This trait can maybe be seen as constituting a part of her personality, and it could be observed when she was in charge of cabinet meetings. Nigel Lawson, her chancellor for seven years, described how she managed to achieve the desired outcome of several cabinet committees or ad hoc groups. He said: ‘Thus what began as a method for the most expedient conduct of business ended as a means of getting her own way irrespective of the merits or political costs.’¹⁰⁸ John Campbell described her way of debating, after hearing what a number of her secretaries of state had said about her: ‘... she was extraordinarily difficult to argue with, because she would never admit to losing an argument, ...’.¹⁰⁹ Furthermore, she was preoccupied with the Thatcher legacy, what people would say that she had achieved during her years as prime minister.¹¹⁰ Having been in power for such a long time possibly also had the effect that she still expected to be in charge.

Thatcher sought to influence the House of Commons in a few debates where the recurring theme was the European Union.¹¹¹ The Single European Act which Britain ratified in 1986 had set targets for further European integration –its aim was political, monetary and social union. The EU members discussed proposals in their respective national Parliaments in preparation for the meeting scheduled to take place in Maastricht (Holland) December 1991. There were several critical issues, according to Thatcher. In a House of Commons debate on 26 June 1991, she voiced her concerns about the consequences if the EU should become a federal union.¹¹² She feared that Britain would have to give up her foreign policy, defence policy and her security policy in order to transfer power to a European super-state. The British

¹⁰⁶ Peter Hennessy, *The Prime minister. The Office and its Holders since 1945* (London: Penguin Books Ltd., 2001), p. 397.

¹⁰⁷ Campbell: *Margaret Thatcher*, p. 15. The impatience was related to female politicians as well.

¹⁰⁸ Nigel Lawson: *The view from No.11: Memoirs of a Tory radical* (London: Transworld Publishers Ltd, 1992), p. 128.

¹⁰⁹ Campbell: *Margaret Thatcher*, p. 17

¹¹⁰ Young: *One of Us*, p. 597

¹¹¹ The European Economic Community (EEC) changed its name to the European Community (EC) in 1965 and again to the European Union 1st November 1993. In order to simplify matters, the EU is also used about the EC when the reported debates took place from 1990 to November 1993, although this is strictly not entirely correct.

¹¹² Margaret Thatcher Foundation, “HC S [European Community] speech” made on 26.06.1991, see: <http://www.margaretthatcher.org/speeches/browse.asp?t=6>. Accessed 01.07.2008.

sovereignty was threatened by the European Union, Thatcher claimed. She also spoke against common social policies as well as a single currency and she wanted a referendum on the Maastricht Treaty. All these issues were highlighted during the following years by Thatcher and Eurosceptic MPs.

Quite early on in his premiership, John Major sought a more friendly approach to his European colleagues in the European Union than Thatcher had displayed. Whereas Thatcher and Chancellor Helmut Kohl of Germany clearly did not get along well, Kohl and Major struck a friendly note early on. Major spoke on 11 March 1991 to the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung in Bonn about Britain being ‘at the very heart of Europe.’¹¹³ This phrase was derided and used on many occasions by Thatcher and other Eurosceptical politicians, apparently believing that Major actually had a different policy on Europe than Thatcher had voiced. John Major says in his auto-biography that the Eurosceptics believed that he favoured a federal Europe,¹¹⁴ which he claimed to be incorrect. However, once this accusation had been voiced about him, it was almost impossible to shake off. The Bruges Group produced a pamphlet which followed up the idea of a federalist Major, and the *Daily Telegraph* gave the pamphlet good coverage. Nicholas Ridley, who had served in Thatcher’s cabinets, also contributed with comments. He shared Thatcher’s sceptical view of the EC, and it was claimed that the pamphlet in reality carried Thatcher’s views.¹¹⁵ This might well be true; as the Bruges Group was founded in the first place to support Thatcher and her views on Europe expressed in the Bruges Speech in 1988. However, it is hard to actually prove that Thatcher was the ghost writer of the Bruges pamphlet in question.

The debates in the House of Commons were fierce on the European issue, both before the Maastricht conference in 1991 and especially afterwards, when the Maastricht Treaty had to be ratified in order to become British law. Three outspoken Eurosceptics were serving in Major’s first cabinet; namely Peter Lilley, Kenneth Baker and Michael Howard. Thatcher had joined the backbenchers and egged them on to voice their resistance to the EC.¹¹⁶ The Eurosceptics in the House of Commons made the debates increasingly difficult for the government and John Major throughout 1992 and also during the first half of 1993, before the Treaty had passed through the House of Commons.

¹¹³ Hugo Young: *This Blessed Plot: Britain and Europe from Churchill to Blair*. (New York: The Overlook Press, Peter Mayer Publishers, Inc., 1999), pp.373-374.

¹¹⁴ John Major: *The Autobiography* (London: HarperCollinsPublishers, 1999), p. 269.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ Gilmour and Garnett: *Whatever Happened to the Tories*, p. 355.

In the 1992 general election the Conservative Party received the plurality of votes, and maintained their parliamentary majority of 21 MPs in the House of Commons. After 9 April Major depended on the support of all his MPs to win a division unless MPs from Labour or the Liberal Democrats voted with the Conservative MPs in the case that some MPs voted against the government. The Eurosceptics increased their power because the Conservative majority was so small, compared to the result in the general election of 1987, when Thatcher had a majority of 102 MPs in the House of Commons.

The Conservative Party whips tried their best to convince the Eurosceptical MPs to vote with the government. They had a fairly good idea as to who might be likely to rebel against the government. Margaret Thatcher talked to 'Fresh Start' MPs and persuaded wavering rebels to disregard the whips.¹¹⁷ Teresa Gorman reports of one incident when John Whittingdale was summoned to see Thatcher before the paving debate on the European Communities Amendment Bill on 4 November 1992. Thatcher scolded him because he had said he considered abstaining in the forthcoming vote. According to Gorman, Thatcher had suggested to him that his brain was unconnected to his spine.¹¹⁸ Even though Thatcher had taken a seat in the House of Lords from July 1992, she continued to influence MPs, helped by a few other peers as Norman Tebbit, Ralph Harris, Robert N. W. Blake and David Ivor Young.¹¹⁹ Observing what Thatcher did in order to persuade MPs as well as constituency volunteers in her old Finchley constituency, Edward Heath was reported to be furious about what his successor was doing:

Commenting on Lady Thatcher's behind-the-scenes lobbying, Mr. Heath said 'This is unbelievable ... I've been 42 and a half years in Parliament. I've been Chief whip. I've been leader of the Party for 10 years, I've been Prime minister – I've never known anything like it before.' He also criticised Tebbit's activities as 'absolutely appalling.'¹²⁰

Obviously, Heath was no objective observer, since his dissatisfaction with Thatcher had been known for many years at the time of the Maastricht debates. However, other sources report of different instances of Thatcher's interference in trying to persuade and control. William Wallace, for instance, states in Kavanagh and Seldon's book *The Major Effect*:

¹¹⁷ The 'Fresh Start' group is presented in chapter 5.

¹¹⁸ Teresa Gorman and Heather Kirby, *The Bastards: Dirty Tricks and The Challenge to Europe* (London: Pan Books, 1993), p.112. A paving debate is an introductory debate in the House of Commons.

¹¹⁹ Different authors name these ardent peers as Thatcher's supporters in the House of Lords; for instance T. Gorman and A. Seldon. They were known as Lord Young of Graffham, Lord Harris of High Cross and Lord Blake of Braydeston.

¹²⁰ David Baker, Andrew Gamble and Steve Ludlam, "Whips or Scorpions? The Maastricht Vote and the Conservative Party", in *Parliamentary Affairs*, 46:2, p. 159.

Lady Thatcher was now a brooding presence in the background, encouraging 'her' partisans to resist the drift of government policy, attracting not only old loyalists, but many of the new 1992 intake of MPs who had become into politics during her long period of political hegemony.¹²¹

The first defeat occurred on 21 May 1992. The vote regarding the European Communities Amendment Bill was about the Committee of the Regions amendment. 26 Conservative MPs voted against the government, while 18 abstained. The government was defeated by 22 votes in total. At the time the Conservative Party had only a majority of 21, while 44 Conservatives actually chose to rebel.

The second defeat happened on 22 July 1993, when the House of Commons voted on the so-called Social Chapter of the Maastricht Treaty. 23 Conservative MPs voted against the party whip and one abstained from voting (this time 24 Conservatives rebelled). Now the Conservative majority was down to only 18, due to the death of two Conservative MPs and the loss of a seat in a by-election. The government lost by a number of 8 votes. It was immediately followed by a vote of confidence the next day, which ended with a majority of 40 votes for the government. The abstaining voter (Rupert Allason) had the whip removed. Stephen George argues that no British government has suffered any worse defeat in the 20th century.¹²² The defiant effort from the Eurosceptic backbenchers destabilized the government.

Then the third defeat took place on 7 December 1994. This time it was a vote on a Labour amendment to Finance Bill regarding increased VAT on gas and electricity. 7 Conservative MPs voted with the Labour Party and 10 abstained (17 rebelled). The government lost by 8 votes. The previous month the whip had been removed from 8 MPs, and a ninth MP had resigned the whip. 7 of the whipless MPs voted for the amendment (against the government).¹²³ The Conservatives in the House of Commons technically were 4 votes short of a majority without the 'Whipless Nine'.

All the rebellions had a devastating effect on the prime minister and the government in general. Anthony Seldon describes in *Major: A Political Life* some of the consequences: 'A persistent feeling of rebellion on the backbenches meant his authority was being ground away.'¹²⁴ The backbenchers' power to influence policy-making seemed to increase. Seldon

¹²¹ William Wallace, "Foreign Policy" in Dennis Kavanagh and Anthony Seldon, eds., *The Major Effect* (London: Papermac, 1994), p. 295.

¹²² Stephen George, *An Awkward Partner: Britain in the European Community* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990, 3rd ed. 1998), p. 254.

¹²³ Shaun Bowler, David M. Farrell and Richard Katz, *Party Discipline and parliamentary Government* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1999), p. 79.

¹²⁴ Seldon, *Major: A Political Life*, p. 512.

continues: 'Many agreed with Peter Riddell that contempt for Major personally was as important in the rebels' action as hatred of the EU.'¹²⁵ In November 1994, the 'Whipless Nine' received more attention than ever before. Journalists followed in their footsteps, and they gave interviews willingly whenever they had a chance. After months of intense media publicity, the whip was restored on 24 April 1995 to the 8 that had been excluded from the party whip, without any repercussions for the rebels. Richard Body had the whip restored on 17 January 1996.

Many of the new Conservative MPs in 1992 were more Eurosceptical, as well as more willing to draw attention to open disagreement in the Conservative Party than what had previously been the case. They disobeyed the party whip in many debates and thereby displayed open defiance and disloyalty, both to the prime minister and the government.¹²⁶ According to Andrew Geddes, the Conservative MPs that were Eurosceptical, were 'Thatcher's children.'¹²⁷ The phrase describes right-wing politicians who shared Thatcher's increasing scepticism about the development in the EU and the implications for Britain, as they saw it. Many of the Eurosceptics had not wanted Thatcher to resign as prime minister, and they felt shock and resentment at the result of the leadership election in 1990. Since Thatcher apparently found the Maastricht Treaty and the future of the European Union so fundamentally important to the future of Britain, she was intent on voicing her concerns in the House of Commons and elsewhere – even though this undermined John Major.¹²⁸ Anthony Seldon and Stuart Ball are very critical in their description of how Thatcher behaved towards Major:

Never in the Party's history had a leader been so undermined by the machinations of his immediate predecessor. Mrs. Thatcher's Eurosceptical voices 'off' and her palpable derision for Major fortified his critics to more open displays of defiance.¹²⁹

It seems that Thatcher saw the Maastricht Treaty and the European Community as a potential threat to British sovereignty. Her Bruges speech which she held on 20 September 1988,

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ Young, *This Blessed Plot*, pp. 412-471

¹²⁷ Andrew Geddes, *The European Union and British Politics: Contemporary Political Studies* (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), p. 199.

¹²⁸ Thatcher, *The Path to Power*, p. 475

¹²⁹ Stuart Ball and Anthony Seldon, *Recovering Power. The Conservatives in Opposition Since 1867* (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), pp. 246-247.

spelled out her worries about the EU and the development towards further integration.¹³⁰ She made it clear that she wanted Britain to be a part of the European Union. However, she feared increased bureaucracy taking place in Brussels by people that were appointed and not elected. She talked about a European super-state that probably would be run from Brussels and that all the member states would be dominated by the centre. The Single European Market, which was scheduled to be in full operation by 1992, was in principle something Thatcher supported, as well as the common currency ECU. Thatcher dismissed the discussion of a European Central Bank. These were her conclusions about the EU in September 1988, and it seems that she relentlessly fought for this Eurosceptical point of view for the next 15 years or so.

Thatcher signed the Single European Act (SEA) in 1985, which actually described the way to a fuller European integration. When the Luxemburg summit discussed the proposals for a new treaty in 1985, there were only 10 members of the EU, with Spain and Portugal soon to become members. Ultimately, the SEA was making way for increased co-operation in Europe; in matters economic, monetary, and political. The SEA came into force by 1 July 1987.¹³¹ Some MPs voiced opposition to the treaty before it was ratified in the House of Commons, and several Conservative politicians who had supported it in 1986 later changed their minds and turned against it. Thatcher seems to be one of them, writing in 1995: 'The Single European Act, contrary to my intentions and my understanding of formal undertakings given at the time, had provided new scope for the European Commission and the European Court to press forward in the direction of centralization.'¹³² The lady who was 'not for turning' apparently had done just that regarding the EU and the implications of the SEA. The Iron Lady image did not imply that she never changed her mind, although this is conceived to be part of the stereo-type image of her.

3.1.2: Thatcher in the House of Lords

Thatcher stayed on in the House of Commons for about a year and a half, before she decided to accept a peerage in the House of Lords in late June 1992. She claimed that she did not feel free to speak out as a backbencher, because she would be said either to support or attack her

¹³⁰ The Bruges Group paper no. 34, "Bruges Revisited" with the speech "Britain & Europe" by Margaret Thatcher, held on 20.09.1988: <http://www.brugesgroup.com/mediacentre/index.live?article=92>, accessed 26.10.2008.

¹³¹ Ragnar Lie, *EU-leksikon* (Oslo: Kunnskapsforlaget ANS, 2007), p. 44.

¹³² Thatcher, *The Path to Power*, p. 473

successor in every statement she made. She said enthusiastically: 'I felt newly liberated to continue the argument about Europe's future.'¹³³

Thatcher continued to voice her opposition to the increasing bureaucracy of the European Union. Her speeches stressed many of the same elements as in her House of Commons speeches: A referendum on the single currency and on the importance of Britain's sovereignty. Her main focus was on foreign policy; in particular anything related to the EU, but also on what was going on in Yugoslavia. Thatcher criticized the government for not committing British troops to Croatia and Bosnia. This argument was repeated in most of the speeches she held on her world-wide tours, as well as in the last two of her books that were published in 1995 and 2002. Many different nationalities, with their own culture and religion met in the Yugoslav melting-pot. As several of the previous East-European countries were liberated from Soviet rule, many of the Yugoslav republics also wanted to become independent countries. The dominating republic Serbia was led by an aggressive nationalist, Slobodan Milosevic, from 1987, and the other ethnic groups feared the Serbian dominance.¹³⁴ Serbian forces attacked Slovenia on 27 June 1991, just two days after Croatia and Slovenia declared independence. In February UN peacekeeping forces were deployed in Croatia. Bosnia-Herzegovina declared her independence shortly afterwards.

John Major and the Foreign Secretary Douglas Hurd were very reluctant about getting involved in the Yugoslav civil war. Anthony Seldon says about Major's predecessor: 'Influencing policy in the background was Thatcher, who had become incensed by the West's failure to act to protect the Muslims in the face of Serb aggression.'¹³⁵ As early as August 1992 Thatcher warned about the 'ethnic cleansing' that was taking place in Bosnia in an article in *The New York Times*. Maybe she had hoped to influence the American government to get involved in the fighting. Thatcher's article made both Hurd and Major angry.¹³⁶ This was an extremely complicated issue, both for British politicians as well as for the EU, the UN and NATO. Cabinet members disagreed strongly whether Britain should get military involved, and presumably Thatcher's involvement broadened the rift.¹³⁷

Thatcher attacked the British government's line of policy on Bosnia in a TV interview on 13 April 1993, and the next day Bosnia was debated in the House of Lords. Thatcher called

¹³³ Ibid., p. 488

¹³⁴ Nataniel Harris, *Krigen i det tidligere Jugoslavia* (Oslo: Libretto forlag, 2001. First published as *The War in former Yugoslavia*, Sussex: Wayland Publishers Ltd., 1997. Norwegian translation by Tom Thorsteinsen), pp. 19-20.

¹³⁵ Seldon: *Major*, p. 305.

¹³⁶ Ibid., p. 306.

¹³⁷ Hennessy, *The Prime Minister*, p. 443.

for action to prevent the atrocities taking place in this region. She deplored the consequences of 'ethnic cleansing' and told about millions of refugees on the run as well as thousands of innocent people being massacred.¹³⁸ The civil war in Yugoslavia went on for several years, and proved almost insolvable, despite the efforts of NATO and the UN international forces, and received widespread condemnation from a lot of countries all over the world. A truce was called in 1999. In her book *The Path to Power* Thatcher claimed that Europe's failure to stop the Serb aggression against the other Yugoslav republics proved the Maastricht Treaty to be a step in the wrong direction. A common European foreign policy is too difficult to come to terms with, she argued.¹³⁹

On 6 July 1999 Thatcher managed to attract more attention than in a long time, when she spoke about former president in Chile, Augusto Pinochet, in the House of Lords. She warmly defended Pinochet, who had been in Britain for a back operation, but then had been arrested and held in warrant because Spanish courts wanted him extradited. Thatcher referred to the Falklands War in 1982, and claimed that Chile had actually helped Britain secure their win over Argentina. Thatcher also brought up Pinochet's destiny when she addressed the Conservative Party conference for the first time since her resignation as prime minister on 6 October 1999.¹⁴⁰

Thatcher's engagement in Yugoslavia's destiny was arguably more important in influencing public opinion than influencing decision-making in Parliament. Foreign Secretary Hurd and Prime minister Major were seriously concerned about the civil war in Yugoslavia and actively involved in discussions both in the House of Commons as well as international organizations. Thatcher's demand for immediate action was probably not positively contributing to solve the matter, rather the contrary.

It has been claimed that the Single European Act transferred more of Britain's sovereignty to the EU than the Maastricht Treaty did in 1992 and 1993. This point of view was severely contested by Margaret Thatcher, who declared in a House of Lords debate that she never would have signed the Maastricht Treaty.¹⁴¹ The Maastricht Treaty was finally ratified in both Houses by August 1993, despite all protestations from Margaret Thatcher and her Eurosceptic supporters.

¹³⁸ Margaret Thatcher Foundation, House of Lords PQ on Bosnia 14 April 1993: <http://www.margaretthatcher.org/speeches/displaydocument.asp?docid=108312>. Accessed 01.07.2008

¹³⁹ Thatcher: *The Path to Power*, pp. 494-495

¹⁴⁰ Walters, Simon, *Tory Wars: Conservatives in Crisis* (London: Politico's Publishing, 2001), p. 174.

¹⁴¹ Thatcher, *The Path to Power*, p. 480; Margaret Thatcher Foundation, HL S European Communities (Amendment) Bill, on 07.06.93; see <http://www.margaretthatcher.org/speeches/displaydocument.asp?docid=108314>. Accessed 01.07.2008.

3.2: Wavering support for the Conservative Party

In the middle of all the debates about the Maastricht Treaty was the general election. It was held on 9 April 1992. Obviously, journalists were eager to have a comment from Margaret Thatcher about her successor before the general election. She refused to praise John Major or endorse his policies publicly before the event and she was hard pressed for any evaluation of the election campaign. She gave the very brief comment: 'Mr. Major is prime minister. I am an ex-prime minister.'¹⁴² This might be interpreted as a serious disapproval of John Major and his policies. Failing to say anything positive can be seen as a very serious statement, and Thatcher could have dismissed reporters quite differently had she wanted to support John Major.

Thatcher's influence on the annual party conferences was observable, even if she did not utter a word. Her role at some of these conferences, in addition to the role she played in general elections and party leader elections are discussed here. Both actions and statements can be interpreted differently in most cases. The image of Thatcher is not one-dimensional. It is conceivable there was a conflict between the public and the private role. Politicians that are used to leading a life in the limelight might experience some difficulty in trying to differentiate between the various roles.

Thatcher started out quite bitter about her resignation in 1990 and felt quite at a loss about her situation and how she now should proceed. She had planned that she could lead the Conservative Party to win the fourth general election, and then maybe resign after two more years as premier. She actually had planned to stay in power for about 15 years in all, and had thought that it was up to her to decide when to quit.¹⁴³ When John Major announced the time for the 1992 general election, Thatcher had criticized Major and his government for about a year, and she had been given ample attention due to speeches abroad and interviews. She kept a low profile during the election campaign, but within a week after the general election, Thatcher's harsh criticism of John Major was published in the American magazine *Newsweek*. It is possible that she did not expect that the Conservatives should win the election, as all the opinion polls predicted a Labour Party majority as the expected outcome. The 1992 general election was a success for the Conservative Party, albeit a small success considering the tiny majority in the House of Commons. Commentators claimed that the election result was not

¹⁴² John Nicholson, "The Last Harrumph" in *The New Republic*, 20 April 1992, pp. 16-17.

¹⁴³ Margaret Thatcher, *The Downing Street Years* (London: HarperCollinsPublishers, 1993), p. 832.

caused by Major and the Conservative Party by doing such a brilliant job; it was rather the fact that Neil Kinnock as the Labour Party leader was not seen able to govern the country. Kinnock resigned as party leader and let John Smith take over. Incidentally, George Urban wrote in his book: 'The Thatcher factor was proving distinctly dispensable. This was not what she had been hoping for.'¹⁴⁴ It is conceivable that she had hoped for an election defeat, with a return to office at the next general election.

Thatcher was busy writing her memoirs during the first half of the 1990s as well as engaging in some behind the scene-activity through the 'Fresh Start' group and other Eurosceptic organizations that worked to prevent the Maastricht Treaty ratification. The election for the 1994 European Parliament was held the year between the book releases. This election was a big disappointment for the Conservative Party, since they received only 27 per cent of the votes and got only 18 out of 84 Members of the European Parliament (MEPs). The result was a lot worse than it had been five years earlier, when they got 32 out of 78 MEPs (33 per cent of the votes). According to Steve Ludlam, the dismal result 'was the worst for the party in a national election this century.'¹⁴⁵ The party chairman, Norman Fowler, asked Thatcher to campaign for the party before the election. Fowler was very concerned that the Liberal Democrats and the Labour Party should manage to win many votes from Conservative voters, but Thatcher did not want to get directly involved in the campaign. She was full of sympathy for the difficult situation for the Tories, but declined to issue a statement to caution Tory voters about voting for the Liberal Democrats. Her reason for keeping such a low profile was that she regarded MEPs as being too much in favour of a federal Europe.¹⁴⁶ This example illustrates how Thatcher used her influence by declining to participate for the benefit of the party. It is possible that she could have other reasons for not wanting to engage in the last weeks of the campaign as well, but it seems a little peculiar to turn down the modest wish of the party chairman.

It can seem quite astonishing that Thatcher consciously encouraged another party and a think-tank like the European Foundation in 1996. She appeared to be careless about future of the party she had led for 15 years. This could be due to disillusion, or that she thought that the European issue was more important than anything else. Her pronounced fight for British sovereignty had become her number one issue, and her increased fear for the EU-bureaucracy

¹⁴⁴ George R. Urban, *Diplomacy and Disillusion at the Court of Margaret Thatcher* (London: I. B. Tauris & Co Ltd., 1996), p. 177.

¹⁴⁵ Steve Ludlam and Martin J. Smith, eds., *Contemporary British Conservatism* (London: Macmillan Press Ltd. 1996), p. 114.

¹⁴⁶ Norman Fowler, *A Political Suicide: The Conservatives' voyage into the wilderness* (London: Politico's Publishing, 2008), pp. 169-170.

had superseded her belief in co-operation within a friendly European community with common goals. Possibly Thatcher feared that socialists, presumably French, German or maybe Italian, should take control of the EU decision-making institutions.¹⁴⁷

In 1996 she had evidently had some sympathy for the Referendum Party, and she had claimed that she would not campaign for the Conservatives in a constituency with a Referendum Party candidate running for office.¹⁴⁸ Thatcher also voiced her support for James Goldsmith who founded the Referendum Party, according to the *Guardian* on 31 August 1996.¹⁴⁹ Her donation to Bill Cash and his European Foundation simply infuriated Major, who now condemned her behaviour publicly. On the front page of the *Independent* on 14 June 1996 the whole row regarding the Referendum Party, the European Foundation and the Conservative Party was described in some detail in the article “Thatcher jabs Major; he wallops back”.¹⁵⁰ Apparently journalist Donald McIntyre thought that Major overreacted to Thatcher’s donation to the European Foundation. Cash had received money from Goldsmith, but he had been told that this was regarded improper by the Conservative chief whip Alastair Goodlad, since Goldsmith led a competing party and might pose a real threat in some constituencies at the forthcoming general election. Thatcher then decided to pay a contribution to Bill Cash and became an honorary patron for the European Foundation. Journalist McIntyre described her payment as a ‘calculated and defiant piece of snook-cocking’, thus implying that she consciously chose to do something that she knew would have an annoying or upsetting impact on people in the Conservative Party. Major stated angrily that he would have preferred that her money had been donated to the Conservative Party instead.¹⁵¹

In a speech held at the Dorchester Hotel in London in November 1996 Thatcher stated her support for the Conservatives, and Labour was criticized for its tax and spending plans.¹⁵² Thatcher’s fear of a socialist Britain was maybe boosted as the Labour Party performed well in opinion polls, and it seemed quite likely that the next general election might be won by the Labour Party. When the next general election was announced, on 18 March 1997, she quickly arranged a press conference outside Chesham Place, where she lived. Here she declared her support for the Conservative Party and for John Major as prime minister. Hypothetically she

¹⁴⁷ Anthony Forster, *Euroscepticism in Contemporary British Politics: Opposition to Europe in the Conservative and Labour Parties since 1945* (London and New York: Routledge, 2002), p. 136.

¹⁴⁸ Seldon, *Major: A Political Life*, p. 663.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 671

¹⁵⁰ Donald McIntyre, “Thatcher jabs Major; he wallops back”, *The Independent*, 14 June 1996, p. 1. British Library, Newspaper Collections, Colindale, London.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁵² Seldon, *Major: A Political Life*, p. 680

was prompted to do this by party colleagues, or perhaps she felt the need to restore some faith in her own party; after her enthusiastic praise of Tony Blair several times in different media. She insisted on coming with Major on a few campaign tours, even though this was hardly an activity suggested by Major. The outcome of the general election hardly surprised anyone, but for the scale of the enormous majority of votes for the Labour Party. Thatcher's ambivalence was quite apparent when she commented on the results. On one side, she was sorry that the Conservative Party had lost; on the other side she almost took malicious pleasure in stating that this could only have happened since she was forced to resign in 1990 – and that the election defeat was bound to happen in 1997.¹⁵³

Thatcher was very supportive of Tony Blair when he replaced Major as prime minister in 1997 with regard to the British-American operation in Kosovo. She was summoned to 10 Downing Street for private consultations with a Labour premier¹⁵⁴ – an event that attracted a lot of attention from politicians and others.¹⁵⁵ In 2003 they also discussed Britain's involvement in Iraq. This seems to indicate that she was able to offer some advice about warfare and public relations, rather than the actual policy-making of the Labour Party. This example adds to the rather complex picture of Margaret Thatcher and her exertion of influence a long time after her forced resignation.

Thatcher had put on a brave face on the Conservative Party conference in October 1996. According to John Campbell, Thatcher gave '... another cloyingly insincere endorsement of Major at Brighton ...'¹⁵⁶ Publicly it was important for the party to stand united behind their leader. This might not have the intended effect when it was a well-known fact that Thatcher privately admired Tony Blair.

It seems a little confusing that Thatcher as soon as the general election date was decided arranged a spontaneous press conference, pledging her support for John Major and the Conservative Party; definitely not the Labour Party.¹⁵⁷ She insisted on joining Major in his campaign on two occasions in April.¹⁵⁸ It is possible that she did this because she had a bad conscience about her apparent lack of support for her successor. Another plausible explanation is that she just wanted to get back into the limelight and saw this as a splendid opportunity. The impact of her appearances is hard to establish. Anthony Seldon did not think that John and Norma Major wanted Thatcher to come along on the campaign outings.

¹⁵³ Campbell, *Margaret Thatcher*, p. 786. The comments were made in 1998.

¹⁵⁴ John Sergeant, *Maggie: Her Fatal Legacy* (London: Macmillan, 2005), pp. 15-16.

¹⁵⁵ Sergeant, *Maggie*, p. 331.

¹⁵⁶ Campbell, *Margaret Thatcher*, p. 784.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid, pp. 784-785.

According to Seldon, her presence created a rather tense atmosphere.¹⁵⁹ It is rather doubtful whether her presence could contribute to making more people vote for the Conservative Party after almost seven years out of office and having been so critical of John Major and his government most of the time.

3.3: Thatcher's influence on different leaders of the Conservative Party 1990-2003

3.3.1 Margaret Thatcher and John Major

Anthony Seldon talks about the 'poisoned relationship' between Thatcher and Major. According to an anonymous source, quoted in *Major: A Political Life*, Thatcher did not behave nicely towards Major. This source said:

She behaved very badly at every level: she gossiped, she put out messages, she withheld support. She used all her political cunning to knife him and stab him and demoralise him and weaken him. Above all she was thinking: 'He is doing my job. How dare he?'¹⁶⁰

On a personal level, she probably made his life and his role so much more difficult than it could have been. Undoubtedly he would still have faced many difficulties in the House of Commons and in the media, but his predecessor could have helped and supported him instead of doing the opposite. She had been a prime minister for 11 years and could have given him both indirect and direct support and valuable advice.

It is hard to pinpoint exactly what the effect of Thatcher's speeches or statement was on most of these issues. When it comes to the effect on Major, an isolated attack on his personality or how he was perceived as a leader could be perceived as bothersome or annoying, maybe disappointing. Persistent attacks from the former premier might have a devastating and cumulative effect. Major experienced repeated attacks from Thatcher, and their relationship was described as a nightmare by the party chairman.¹⁶¹

The *Sunday Telegraph* had a big headline on its first page on 2 June 1991, saying "I'm disappointed in Major, says bitter Thatcher." It was six months since her resignation, and Thatcher was not happy about her successor at all. In the article she was also quoted to have said to an unnamed source: 'He is grey. He has no ideas. I have been totally deceived.'

¹⁵⁹ Seldon, *Major: A Political Life*, p. 723.

¹⁶⁰ Seldon, *Major*, p. 255

¹⁶¹ Fowler, *A Political Suicide*, p. 99

Only a few weeks after this article, on 28 June 1991, Thatcher was interviewed by Michael Brunson, ITN, about losing office. Brunson asked whether she realized that she might appear to be second-guessing John Major. She denied that this was true, but quickly changed the subject. Later on she talked about her future role. She said: 'I am now free to live another life of very practical use, both to the people of this country and internationally. I have a *passion* for Britain, for the spirit of the people, for their character. It's done wonders for the world in the past. It can still do wonders for the world into the future.'¹⁶²

The Major government was criticized on American television only three months after her resignation, where Thatcher said: 'I see a tendency to try to undermine what I achieved and to go back to more powers for government.'¹⁶³ Admittedly, she might not want to harm Major's reputation or hurt his feelings at this point; it is possible that she just felt so hurt by the turn of events that she just wanted to give prominence to her own achievement.

Norman Fowler, the party chairman (1992-1994) described how Major reacted to Thatcher's criticism. The strains of critical remarks were making their toll on the new premier. Besides, how to handle Thatcher became an issue for the party chairman and the prime minister to discuss and continued to be an issue for the rest of his premiership.¹⁶⁴ The party did not want internal disagreement or fight ruin the chance of a good election result. If Thatcher advocated a different opinion than Major, this might confuse the electorate and endanger the vote; as it might secure a vote for another party.

Thatcher commented on what she was unhappy about. Around the time of the 1992 general election, Thatcher was quoted in the *Sunday Times* to have commented to an unnamed source about the campaign, that it 'did not have enough oomph, enough whizz, enough steam.'¹⁶⁵ This could be interpreted as criticism of the Conservative Party, the Central Office administration or possibly of the party leader, John Major.

Peter Hennessy characterizes in his book *The Prime Minister* the influence of Thatcher on Major and his government. He writes:

... Black Wednesday unleashed tidal waves of criticism and attack, not least from within the Conservative Party, the most damaging assaults soon coming to be associated with the lady likened by Douglas Hurd to 'the Queen over the Water', Mrs Thatcher – an image which in Hurd's view 'she did nothing to discourage and certainly made his [Major's] very difficult.'¹⁶⁶

¹⁶² Margaret Thatcher Foundation, TV Interview for ITN (recalls losing office) on 28 June 1991, see <http://www.margaretthatcher.org/speeches/displaydocument.asp?docid=110849> Accessed 01.07.2008

¹⁶³ Fowler, *A Political Suicide*, p. 95.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid, p.89

¹⁶⁶ Hennessy, *The Prime Minister*, p. 465.

In other words, Thatcher was among Major's most fierce critics together with other Tory politicians. Norman Tebbit joined Thatcher in her disparagement of Major's policies.¹⁶⁷ Their combined efforts were evident both in the House of Commons and on party conferences. This will be discussed later in this chapter.

3.3.2: Margaret Thatcher and William Hague 1997-2001

Thatcher actually intervened in the leadership contest in 1997, when she publicly supported the candidacy of William Hague, and urged people to vote for him. He was her preferred candidate, even though she had been somewhat hesitant to flag her support, and her pressing approval could be seen as a somewhat dubious advantage for Hague. He was labelled 'Thatcher's heir', which is not necessarily how he would have wanted to portray himself, and the characterization stuck to him throughout his four years as Conservative Party leader. John Campbell says in his book that '... the memory of Mrs. Thatcher was a millstone around Hague's neck, as it had been around Major's.'¹⁶⁸ The other candidates for the party leadership in 1997 were Michael Portillo, Kenneth Clarke, and the trio Michael Howard, Peter Lilley and John Redwood. Anthony Seldon and Peter Snowdon argue that Hague was elected party leader '... as demonstrably the least offensive and ideologically charged candidate on offer.'¹⁶⁹ They also state that Hague's campaign was 'aided by Thatcher's ringing endorsement'.¹⁷⁰ Those MPs who had wanted Thatcher to continue in 1990 could have voted for her candidate in 1997 out of loyalty to their former prime minister, or they simply did not want to see Kenneth Clarke or John Redwood as the next leader.

Thatcher's intervention was not necessarily an advantage for William Hague or the Conservative Party. However, there were even more Eurosceptics in the House of Commons after the 1997 general election, even though they might be sceptical to the EU-issue for very different reasons.¹⁷¹ Anthony Forster commented: 'After 1997 at least three-quarters of the parliamentary Conservative Party embraced a form of Euroscepticism, and the party's choice of leaders along with its 1997 and 2001 general election manifestos reflected this.'¹⁷²

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

¹⁶⁸ Campbell, *Margaret Thatcher*, p. 791.

¹⁶⁹ Anthony Seldon and Peter Snowdon, "The Barren Years: 1997-2005", in *Recovering Power: The Conservatives in Opposition since 1867* (Great Britain: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), p. 250.

¹⁷⁰ Seldon and Snowdon, "The Barren Years", p. 250.

¹⁷¹ Kevin Hickson, ed., *The Political Thought of the Conservative Party since 1945* (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), p. 127. This was also mentioned in Hugo Young's book *This Blessed Plot*.

¹⁷² Forster, *Euroscepticism in Contemporary British Politics*, p. 130.

The EU-issue was important in Britain yet again in the election for the European Parliament in 1999. Hague decided to leave the centre ground, and go for a more right-wing, Eurosceptical attitude in the campaign before this election in June 1999.¹⁷³ A new party had been formed, which was called the 'Pro-Euro Conservative Party'. This party advocated its support for the single currency and had been established to compete for conservative voters. This could also have induced the Conservative Party under Hague to choose a Eurosceptical slogan to front their campaign, namely 'In Europe: Not Run by Europe'.¹⁷⁴ Since James Goldsmith died shortly after the 1997 general election, his Referendum Party did not represent any danger to the Conservative Party in this European election. However, the United Kingdom Independence Party was capable of attracting Conservative voters who wanted a strong anti-EU party. Hague chaired several 'Keep the Pound' meetings and once more the Eurosceptic Conservative MPs believed that this was the right approach to win votes up and down the country.¹⁷⁵ The result of the European election in 1999 gave the Conservative Party a boost, because they managed to get 36 out of the 84 seats (about 36 per cent of the votes).

Hague stated that the Conservative Party did not want to join the single currency during the time of the next Parliament if the party won the general election in 2001. This apparently only reminded the electorate of the deep split in the Conservative government during the 1990s, and the Labour Party profited from the continued disagreement over this.¹⁷⁶ Three Conservative MPs resigned from the shadow cabinet in 1998 because of Hague's Eurosceptic stance, and two more defected to other parties in 1998 and 1999.¹⁷⁷ Apart from the Euroscepticism it proved difficult for the party to settle its policy on other issues, and this proved to be a challenge for the party leader to tackle. Some politicians, among them Francis Maude and Michael Portillo, wanted a more liberal attitude towards gay people and to people of different ethnic background. These sentiments were maybe too radical for many Conservatives and controversial for true Thatcherites, who would like to see 'family values' restored.

With such a large group of Conservative Eurosceptic MPs in the House of Commons since 1997, it is presumably not surprising that Margaret Thatcher's Eurosceptic ideas were cherished and promoted. Seven years after Thatcher resigned as prime minister, there had never been so many Eurosceptic MPs in the House of Commons.

¹⁷³ Seldon and Snowdon, "The Barren Years", p. 253

¹⁷⁴ Charmley, *A History*, p. 262.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid., p. 263

¹⁷⁶ Seldon and Snowdon, "The Barren Years", p. 253

¹⁷⁷ Ibid. These left the shadow cabinet: Ian Taylor, David Curry and Stephen Dorrell. These defected the party: Peter Temple-Morris and Shaun Woodward.

3.3.3: Margaret Thatcher and Iain Duncan Smith 2001-2003

When Labour won another landslide victory and got a majority of 165 in the House of Commons in the general election in June 2001, Thatcher again sought to voice her opinion regarding party politics. Hague resigned as party leader immediately after the election, and now the most likely successors were Kenneth Clarke, Iain Duncan Smith and Michael Portillo.¹⁷⁸ Seldon and Snowdon state in the book *Recovering Power*: ‘Once again, the issue of Europe and figure of Mrs. Thatcher returned to haunt the leadership contest.’¹⁷⁹ Thatcher published a letter in the *Daily Telegraph* that warned against Kenneth Clarke as the next leader for the Tories, on 21 August 2001, because he supported the single currency. This annoyed the editor of the *Daily Mail*, who on the following day reprimanded Thatcher for her intrusion in the newspaper, and warned against the consequences if the party yet again elected an unsuitable leader.¹⁸⁰ The editor stated: ‘... the Tory party ... is so obsessed with Europe that if it risks the wrong leader again it risks the very real possibility of political extinction.’¹⁸¹ In a way this could reflect the belief that Thatcher actually was in a position to influence Conservative voters. It could also be interpreted to say something about how serious the state of the party seemed to be in.

The Labour Party used the combined image of William Hague and Margaret Thatcher on their poster to warn the electorate of the Conservative Party.¹⁸² It is quite telling that her picture was used even though it was 11 years since she had retired. John Campbell claims that the Labour Party ‘exploited her unpopularity’, as they also had done previously.¹⁸³

During the election campaign, Michael Portillo said that he had Thatcher’s approval in the leadership contest, which Thatcher rebuffed when she was asked to confirm this.¹⁸⁴ Consequently, the Eurofriendly Kenneth Clarke and the newly liberal Michael Portillo were turned down as prospective leaders of the Conservative Party by Thatcher. Only the fiercely Eurosceptic Iain Duncan Smith was given her blessing.

In the 2001 leadership election the next leader of the Conservative Party was to be voted on by the Conservative Party members, when the choice of candidates was narrowed down to two, according to the new rules introduced by Hague. Even though the matter was decided by the party members, Thatcher’s preferred candidate won the contest. Iain Duncan

¹⁷⁸ Seldon, and Snowdon, “The Barren Years”, p. 258.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid.

¹⁸⁰ Campbell, *Margaret Thatcher*, pp. 791-792

¹⁸¹ Ibid.

¹⁸² Ibid.

¹⁸³ Ibid.

¹⁸⁴ Charmley, *A History*, p. 266

Smith had proven himself a true Eurosceptic since he was given a seat as an MP in 1992, and he was described as one of ‘Thatcher’s children’. He had rebelled against the government in the Maastricht Treaty votes. The other candidates were either too integrationist (Clarke) or too liberal (Portillo). Michael Ancram and Michael Howard were candidates as well in the first ballot. In the second ballot there were only three contestants: Clarke, Portillo and Duncan Smith.¹⁸⁵ This is not to say that Thatcher dictated how the party members should vote. It could be a coincidence that Duncan Smith won the leadership contest. Arguably the other candidates proved too controversial for the rank and file of the party. However, Euroscepticism seemed to dominate a considerable part of the parliamentary party.

The election on 7 June 2001 did not improve the Conservative Party’s situation in the House of Commons – as the Labour Party won with a second landslide majority of 165, and the Conservatives only got 166 out of the 659 seats. The policy shift towards a more Eurosceptic stance had not been successful. Iain Duncan Smith did not want to condemn Thatcher’s views on the EU in 2002, when her *Statecraft* book was published. Duncan Smith was a right-wing politician and a dedicated Thatcherite, but he did not imitate his mentor’s leadership style – on the contrary, he did not assert much authority in the House of Commons or in shadow cabinet meetings. If Thatcher’s health had been better, she might have stepped in and defended him, but she declared that her public appearances had to be avoided due to her declining health in March 2002. One of her last political acts had been to endorse his candidacy as the next party leader. This approval could unfortunately not help Duncan Smith much. His position as party leader was challenged in October 2003. Michael Howard was the only candidate nominated to succeed him.

3.4: How party conferences were influenced by Thatcher and her ardent supporters

The Conservative Party conference in October 1992 intensified the division of the party and Margaret Thatcher could be seen as one of the chief architects behind the cleavage that was getting wider and more profound. Thatcher was by now a member of the House of Lords and still condemning the Maastricht Treaty. She did not want it to be ratified because it would

¹⁸⁵ David Butler and Gareth Butler, *British Political Facts Since 1979* (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006) p. 47.

mean transferring power to ‘unelected bureaucrats.’¹⁸⁶ The Eurosceptical and former minister in Thatcher’s cabinet, Norman Tebbit, received a standing ovation from the audience when he got up to speak at the conference. He talked condescendingly of the government and its policy on Europe and launched a vicious attack on the prime minister, which was applauded heartily by parts of the conference. Norman Fowler, the then chairman of the party, described the most eager Tebbit-fans as ‘lager louts’ – in other words loudmouthed, young and ‘aggressively self-confident.’¹⁸⁷ Thatcher and Tebbit did what they could to influence those who were present at the conference, although a large number of Conservatives supported the more Eurofriendly Douglas Hurd and Michael Heseltine. Hurd made an appeal for unity of the party, and Heseltine defended the government’s position to Europe. They both received standing ovations.

In the middle of the conference week the article “The autumn of our discontent” by Margaret Thatcher was published in *The European*. It was a full-blown attack on the Maastricht Treaty, and it received widespread media attention.¹⁸⁸ The teaser text focused on the ongoing party conference and the split regarding the Maastricht Treaty. In the article Thatcher warned about a United States of Europe that is run from Brussels, which would entail increased bureaucracy and the introduction of a single currency.¹⁸⁹ The editor seemed to fully agree with Thatcher, and said: ‘... John Major is presiding over economic and monetary collapse at home and a crisis of confidence in his own leadership qualities at home and abroad.’¹⁹⁰ The newspapers made the most of Thatcher’s attack in their coverage. The conference continued the next day, and Thatcher received applause as she entered, but several party delegates did not stand in order to salute her. According to Norman Fowler her article backfired.¹⁹¹ However, this incident illustrates that Thatcher still had a big standing in the Conservative Party, nearly two years after her resignation. She was still highly capable of attracting the headlines and she still had a large group of supporters in the Conservative Party.

Margaret Thatcher had no formal function at the party conference after her resignation; still it was taken for granted that she would be present, and that she was given a prominent place as a former prime minister. Norman Fowler described in his book the

¹⁸⁶ Robert Taylor, *John Major: 20 British Prime Ministers of the 20th Century* (London: Haus Publishing Limited, 2006), p. 71

¹⁸⁷ Fowler, *A Political Suicide*, p. 133.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 134.

¹⁸⁹ Margaret Thatcher, “The autumn of our discontent” in *The European*, 8-11 October 1992, pp. 8-9. British Library, Newspaper Collections, Colindale, London.

¹⁹⁰ *The European*, “Wanted: clarity, not Europeak”, editorial, 8-11 October 1992, p. 8. British Library, Newspaper Collections, Colindale, London.

¹⁹¹ Fowler, *A Political Suicide*, p. 135.

intricate considerations that the prime minister and he as party chairman undertook in order to pay the former prime minister the proper respect, but at the same time not exaggerating the importance of her presence.¹⁹² It was regarded as a fine balancing act; ensuring that the conference greeted her properly with an ovation, but avoiding that she was given a longer ovation than the present prime minister.

The fact that Thatcher was challenged as a party leader and was forced to resign has been described as a prime ministerial coup by some commentators.¹⁹³ John Biffen talked about ‘the revenge of the unburied dead’ which was launched almost simultaneously.¹⁹⁴ The men behind this apparent coup were Conservative MPs and the aim of the challenge was to provide a new leader of the party. Thatcher had become an electoral liability – several MPs thought that she would never be able to win the next general election. It is no surprise that the party conferences after her fall were going to be difficult for the party to handle. Thatcher had a large following of supporters according to the first ballot of the leadership contest. The last thing the chairman and the party leader possibly wanted was to enhance the party’s difficulties due to her presence at the conference. Thatcher made it no easier for the party to ignore how she behaved out of office, when she early on started to criticize Major and his government’s policies. Dennis Kavanagh considers the problem of having a former leader trying to influence his or her successor’s policies as if it were a question of giving prompts to an actor on the stage. He states:

Mrs. Thatcher’s agenda, largely dictated from political exile, seems wilfully to ignore the problems of party management, particularly over Europe, and the pressures which led many colleagues to consider that she had outlived her usefulness as party leader.¹⁹⁵

After her resignation she had no formal power to decide the policies of the Conservative Party. Nevertheless, she was busy trying to make an impact on what the party and the government, especially until 1997, ought to do. Her activities included writing her memoirs, articles, delivering speeches and showing up at important party rallies and conferences.

The function of the annual autumn Conservative Party conference is to boost party morale and provide a chance for all the rank and file members of the party to gather and meet all the prominent party leaders. Members of the cabinet or the shadow cabinet, the central

¹⁹² Norman Fowler was party chairman 1992-94.

¹⁹³ Dennis Kavanagh, *The Reordering of British Politics: Politics After Thatcher* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), p. 195.

¹⁹⁴ Hennessy, *The Prime Minister*, p. 403.

¹⁹⁵ Kavanagh, *The Reordering of British Politics*, p. 203.

office organization with the chairman of the party and all the members from different levels of the national committees have a chance to meet face to face. The conference might also give the party leadership some feedback about some issues, whether they are regarded controversial or popular. The conference is organized by the National Union of Conservative and Unionist Associations, and the party leader presents the direction of where the party is going.

As previously mentioned, one of the controversial issues was the ratification of the Maastricht Treaty. Thatcher's article that was published in the newspaper *The European* criticized both the treaty, the direction of the new Major government, and the prime minister. Thatcher actually referred to the Maastricht Treaty as a 'ruinous straitjacket', quite contrary to the Major's positive mention of the same treaty in the party manifesto published before the general election in April that year.¹⁹⁶ Consequently, it was quite awkward for the party leadership to deal with the previous party leader in these circumstances. It is vital to consider the impact of the ongoing debate in the House of Commons and in the Conservative Party. Political scientist Andrew Geddes says: '... the Maastricht deal lit the blue touch paper beneath the Conservative Party, which ignited to cause civil war within the Party and played an important part in Labour's landslide victories of 1997 and 2001.'¹⁹⁷

Since Thatcher had made her resistance of the Maastricht Treaty an issue of paramount importance, she continued her fight against other EU-related issues when the Maastricht Treaty finally was ratified by Parliament in August 1993. Fowler speaks about the need for 'reconciliation' at the 1993 party conference. He wanted Major to kiss Thatcher on the cheek, as a kind of gesture to soften up the Eurosceptic Conservatives at the conference, after several rebellious divisions in the House of Commons where Major had to force votes of confidence in order to achieve the necessary majority for the government's motions. After some protestation beforehand, Major gave Thatcher the requested peck on the cheek, and the two prime ministers had staved off an embarrassing moment. Later during the same conference, extracts from Thatcher's *The Downing Street Years* were published in a couple of newspapers, further straining the relationship between Major and Thatcher.

On a happier note, Thatcher was celebrated at the party conference in 1995, since her 70th birthday only was a week away. George Urban referred to the occasion when he quoted Hugo Young's statement in the *Guardian*: "At the age of seventy, Lady Thatcher 'reached the

¹⁹⁶ Fowler, *A Political Suicide*, p. 97.

¹⁹⁷ Geddes, *The European Union*, p. 88.

fateful condition of being famous for being famous.’”¹⁹⁸ She was well received by the conference, which provided a good occasion to reconcile political enemies, even though her second book *The Path to Power* might have given her antagonists even more reason to condemn her. She was treated to a party at 10 Downing Street by Major, and she also had a big celebration at a restaurant with the Queen as one of the guests.¹⁹⁹ In the US people paid \$1,000 to take part in her fund-raising birthday dinner for the Thatcher Foundation.²⁰⁰ Thatcher’s popularity in the US was substantial, and her standing there was apparently quite different than in Britain at the time, even though her birthday was officially celebrated in the Conservative Party.

An example of the somewhat ambiguous honour of having a former premier present at a party conference can be related to the party conference in 1999. Thatcher was given the opportunity to address the party delegates for the first time since her resignation. The incident was recalled by Simon Walters, who said: ‘Hague felt badly let down when she virtually hijacked the 1999 Tory conference, using it as a platform to defend General Pinochet – not the kind of issue likely to reconnect the Conservatives with ordinary voters.’²⁰¹ The whole speech was dedicated to praising the former Chilean state leader and criticizing the present Labour government for detaining Pinochet unlawfully.²⁰² Thatcher’s warm defence of Pinochet, the dictator, might just draw unwanted attention to how right-wing she apparently was or had become in later years after her resignation. Her reasons for speaking up for the former dictator went back to the days of the Falklands War and the support Thatcher received from Pinochet then. She also claimed that democracy had been introduced in Chile, which was praiseworthy in her opinion. This probably caused embarrassment with the party delegates and was likely to be an issue that Conservative Party politicians desperately did not want to be associated with. The incident has not been referred to by many of the Conservative politicians who have published their diaries or memoirs after this incident. Perhaps it is more likely to be mentioned in the diaries of politicians who represent other parties.

Political journalist John Sergeant had discussions with former MP and a member of John Major’s cabinets, Christopher Patten, doing research for his book about Thatcher, *Maggie: Her Fatal Legacy*. Patten claimed that Thatcher was to blame for the ruin of the

¹⁹⁸ Urban, *Diplomacy and Disillusion*, p. 161.

¹⁹⁹ Campbell, *Margaret Thatcher*, p. 780

²⁰⁰ Tom Rhodes, “Thatcher’s \$1,000 platform”, published in *The Times*, 24.10.1995, p. 14. British Library, Newspaper Collections, Colindale, London.

²⁰¹ Walters, *Tory Wars*, p. 174.

²⁰² Margaret Thatcher Foundation, “Speech on Pinochet at the Conservative Party Conference” 06.10.1999, <http://www.margaretthatcher.org/speeches/displaydocument.asp?docid=108383>. Accessed on 03.07.2008.

Conservative Party.²⁰³ This was of course a subjective remark from a politician who seldom agreed with the former premier on for instance foreign policy. It illustrates that Thatcher either seemed to be loved or hated by her former colleagues. Her political legacy is the theme in the following part.

3.5: How Thatcher's legacy was perceived and how it continued to influence the party

Peter Lilley held a Butler Memorial Lecture on 20 April 1999.²⁰⁴ He called for a revision of the party's Thatcherite policies, especially on public services and the issue of privatization. He claimed that Thatcherism had its limitations, and that the party should renew its ideology.²⁰⁵ Thatcher reacted furiously when she learned what Lilley had said. The speech was regarded as a provocation by the Thatcher-friendly politicians in the House of Commons, and William Hague, the Conservative Party leader, did not approve its contents. Thatcher's legacy was thus still being safeguarded, nine years after her premiership had ended. John Campbell says in his book: 'Instead of enabling Hague to move out of Lady Thatcher's shadow, the resulting outcry forced him to repudiate any such intention ...'²⁰⁶ As a consequence of lacking endorsement of his opinion, Lilley left the government quite soon after the speech. Other prominent politicians also resigned; Gillian Shepherd, Norman Fowler and Michael Howard.²⁰⁷ John Charmley claims that Lilley was sacked by Hague for condemning the Thatcher legacy.²⁰⁸ Indirectly, Thatcher strongly influenced the policies of the Conservative Party. As Hague proved unwilling to condemn Thatcher, he continued to trace her footsteps also when it came to the European issue, or more precisely the European Union.

The *BBC* produced a documentary programme called *The Curse of the Mummy* which was shown in November 2001. The title refers to an episode at the Conservative Party's spring conference, when Thatcher had passed a poster which was advertising a film called *The Mummy Returns*. She related the title to herself as a small joke at the conference, unaware that this was a horror film. Cartoonists and commentators used the opportunity to feature her as a

²⁰³ Sergeant, *Maggie*, p. 11 (the book was published in 2005).

²⁰⁴ He was a devoted Eurosceptic and one of the three so-called 'bastards' in Major's cabinet. He had been shadow chancellor of the exchequer 1997-98, but left the shadow cabinet in December 1998. He was deputy leader of the Conservative Party 1998-99.

²⁰⁵ Seldon and Snowdon, "The Barren Years", p. 254.

²⁰⁶ Campbell, *Margaret Thatcher*, p. 790.

²⁰⁷ Seldon and Snowdon, "The Barren Years", p. 255.

²⁰⁸ Charmley, *A History of Conservative Politics*, p. 263.

ghost or a monster, or even a zombie. *The Curse of the Mummy*, however, claimed that Thatcher had seriously damaged the Conservative Party, or that the last two election defeats were the results of Thatcher's negative influence.²⁰⁹

3.6 Conclusion

Thatcher had a strong standing in the parliamentary Conservative Party at the time of the leadership election in 1990, even though she failed to get enough votes to win. Since she was so determined to continue a life in politics as well as keeping up a public role for herself, conflicts with her successor seemed unavoidable. It seems that Thatcher thrived in conflicts, when she could take a clear stand and criticize her opponent's views. The issue of the European Union and the Maastricht Treaty resonated well with the Eurosceptics within the Conservative Party, and gave many Thatcher-supporters the mandate to openly defy the new prime minister in a number of debates in the House of Commons. John Major's views did not differ a lot from Thatcher's point of view on the EU or the Maastricht Treaty. However, he had a different attitude to his European colleagues and had a somewhat different approach to discussions with them. He was maybe better at negotiating difficult issues and more eager to reach a compromise than his predecessor had been.

Thatcher's supporters continued to rebel in many debates regarding the EU after Thatcher stood down as an MP and took a seat in the House of Lords as Baroness Thatcher of Kesteven. Here she continued speaking against the Maastricht Treaty and criticized the government's failure to prevent blood-shed and atrocities in the former Yugoslavia.

Thatcher was able to exert some influence on the succeeding party leaders from 1990 to 2001. She supported John Major, because she thought he would continue her policies and support her legacy. The main reason for her support might have been that she above anything else wanted to avoid Michael Heseltine as the next prime minister, because he was seen as a Europhile politician and a 'wet'. William Hague had perhaps secured a win in the leadership contest with Thatcher's help in 1997, but four years later he could not go on, even with Thatcher's backing during the election campaign. Now the next protégé stepped forward, described as 'Thatcher's son', Iain Duncan Smith.

Thatcher's presence at the annual party conferences gave the party leadership reason to despair and worry, because of her repeated criticism of the party leader and the direction of

²⁰⁹ Campbell, *Margaret Thatcher*, p.792.

the government when the party had a majority in the House of Commons. The leadership of the party struggled to present a united party, even if the ongoing battles almost split the party – and Thatcher did her very best to influence people with her views, whenever there was an opportunity. More than once her views were quite controversial, potentially creating a damaging image of the party or the Conservative voters. However, she was a highly respected former prime minister to many people, as the celebrations of her 70th birthday demonstrated.

Chapter 4:

How Margaret Thatcher influenced public opinion by her public appearances and books

This chapter deals primarily with many of the public appearances that Margaret Thatcher had outside Parliament; on travels abroad and in Britain. Many of these appearances held by invitation, others were due to Thatcher's own initiative. It is vital to remember that Thatcher voiced her political views when she appeared publicly on events to speak or to advertise her books. It is conceivable that she sought to exert her influence on people in general as well as leaders, advisers, consultants, academics, and political commentators in particular.

The first part is about a small number of key speeches, with some discussion about their impact. Part two is about Thatcher's involvement in Asia – in Hong Kong contributing to a peaceful return of the colony to China, and in several Asian countries promoting British firms. The third part is all about her three books that were published in the 1990s or later. The books had profound consequences for John Major and the Conservative Party. Part four is about three selected articles written by Thatcher and published in newspapers or a magazine. The last part concerns interviews and articles that reported her views on specific issues.

4.1: Key speeches and their consequences

Apparently Thatcher expected her views to be influential when she was no longer the leader of the Conservative Party from December 1990. She was a person who delighted in debate, strife and attention. After her 11 years as Prime minister, she was an experienced politician used to get her views across on a broad set of political issues. This could be a motive for her frequent appearances after her resignation. Thatcher had maintained a loyal set of supporters across the country. On the whole, however, she was more popular abroad – for instance in the

Eastern European countries, in several Asian countries as well as in the US and some South-American countries. Thatcher's reputation as state leader during the 1980s made her a popular guest speaker. The 'Iron Lady' soubriquet made her quite unique, and this might have attracted publicity wherever she went.

The themes for her many speeches were the EU, the need for Britain to have a referendum on the Maastricht Treaty and on the issue of a single currency. She was also very concerned about the civil war in Yugoslavia and the need for intervention from other European countries in order to avoid atrocities and bloodbath. The following section takes a closer look at a few key speeches and their effects.

4.1.1 The Hague Speech, May 1992

Margaret Thatcher supported Britain's membership of the EU and believed in the single market as a means to liberalize European trade. She signed the Single European Act while she was prime minister in 1985, which set goals for further European political integration. In 1988 she seemed to have regretted the speed of the integration process and also the intent of some of her European colleagues, who were committed to further steps towards convergence between member states. In a speech delivered in The Hague on 15 May 1992 entitled "Europe's Political Architecture", she managed to surprise, alternatively to shock her listeners. This event took place only a fortnight after the Second Reading of the Maastricht Bill in the House of Commons, when 22 Tory rebels voted against their own party. The bill was passed with the support of other parties. In this speech Thatcher brought to light the problem of a re-united Germany and voiced her worries about the power of the new Germany and the problems this might lead to within the EC.²¹⁰ She claimed that Germany in fact had the power to veto any major decision, and that the Bundesbank could ignore the financial problems of other G7 countries.²¹¹ Thatcher insisted that American troops had to stay in Europe to preserve peace and actually to check the fledgling power of united Germany.

Her second main worry concerned the direction of the EU Commission – the perceived goal of a 'centralised bureaucratic federal state' as opposed to Thatcher's ideal of the opposite – a 'free-market Europe of sovereign states'.²¹² She accentuated in her rhetorical

²¹⁰ Margaret Thatcher Foundation, Speech in the Hague ("Europe's Political Architecture"), on 15.05.1992, p. 4: <http://www.margaretthatcher.org/speeches/displaydocument.asp?docid=108296> Accessed 01.07.2008

²¹¹ Ibid., p. 5

²¹² Ibid., p. 7

style the following claim: 'A half-Europe imposed by tyranny was one thing; a half-Europe imposed by Brussels would be a moral catastrophe depriving the Community of its European legitimacy.'²¹³ Thatcher's speech came only in the month after the 1992 general election, and it did not diminish the difficulties that Major might have in the House of Commons with the Maastricht Treaty ratification. Thatcher commented three years later in her book *The Path to Power* '...I found it easier to express even these controversial points about international relations abroad than at home.'²¹⁴ She was in other words aware that her views were causing debate, although it might seem a little strange that she felt free to be more critical abroad than in Britain. Thatcher probably expected the speech to be reported in British media, and potentially to create a heated debate. John Major had established a good relationship with the German Chancellor Helmut Kohl when he succeeded Thatcher as prime minister. Thatcher's fear of a powerful Germany did little to support the cautious improvement of Anglo-German relations with her speech in The Hague.

4.1.2 The CNN speech in Washington DC, September 1992

The preliminaries to the speech ought to be included as an introduction. Thatcher had fought a long battle for many years against joining the Exchange Rate Mechanism, before she succumbed to the pressure of her chancellor, Nigel Lawson and her foreign secretary, Geoffrey Howe and agreed to let sterling join the Exchange Rate Mechanism (ERM) which was a part of the European Monetary System (EMS) in 1989. She was adamant that the ERM was to be avoided, and Philip Stevens describes her view at that time: 'Her antagonism towards the mechanism had become pathological.'²¹⁵

The value of pound sterling was bound to a fixed exchange rate of German mark. The actual entry was on 5 October 1990, and Major had by then succeeded Lawson as chancellor and Douglas Hurd was foreign secretary. A little more than a month later John Major was elected as the new leader of the Conservative Party and replaced Thatcher as prime minister. Britain was forced to leave the ERM on 16 September 1992 ('Black Wednesday'). The news about the exit reached Thatcher who was in Washington at the time. Her controlled reaction quoted in *The Times* was: 'If you try to buck the market, the market will buck

²¹³ Ibid.

²¹⁴ Margaret Thatcher, *The Path to Power* (New York: Harper Collins Publishers Inc., 1995), p. 491.

²¹⁵ Philip Stevens, *Politics and the Pound: The Tories, the Economy and Europe* (London: Macmillan, 1997. First published 1996), p. 103.

you.’²¹⁶ John Campbell says that she was privately thrilled by the news, which proved her anxieties regarding the ERM right. According to Woodrow Wyatt she phoned up friends to share the good news.²¹⁷

On 19 September, shortly after the ERM-exit, Thatcher delivered a speech to CNN World Economic Development Conference in Washington DC. She congratulated John Major and chancellor Norman Lamont on the ERM-outcome, and warned against a re-entry at a later time. She said that the fixed exchange rate seemed to be regarded as a virility symbol to some politicians, and she added: ‘... I must say, for myself, I never felt the need for a virility symbol.’²¹⁸ She referred to the French referendum on the Maastricht Treaty that was going to take place the next day and she claimed that the British electorate was ‘indignant’ for not being allowed their say in a referendum.²¹⁹ An important qualification of the referendum was, according to Thatcher, that it ‘... is not a vote on whether we should have a European Community – but on what kind of European Community it should be.’²²⁰

Thatcher stated her vision of the EU in the future and said: ‘We should aim at a multi-track Europe, in which groups of different states forge varying levels of co-operation and integration on a case-by-case basis.’²²¹ It is worth noticing that John Major also talked about a multi-track Europe. For him this presented a political solution to the obvious squeeze that Britain found herself in: Between the demands for further integration from Britain’s EU partners and the Eurosceptical flank in the House of Commons that resisted this.

In her speech Thatcher envisaged an Atlantic Economic Community for the US, Canada, Mexico and the EU countries – a free-trade area consisting of EU and North-America. She also claimed that other areas would benefit from this co-operation as well; areas like defence and culture. She continued: ‘It would, in effect, be the economic underpinning of NATO – and make a great deal more sense than the various schemes for giving defence identity to the European Community.’²²²

Thatcher’s idea of a wide-spread co-operation in an Atlantic Economic Community could be seen as somewhat contradictory. She was clearly set against further European integration, at the same time as she found an Atlantic Economic Community quite natural for increased integration, also when it came to military and cultural areas. It is very difficult to

²¹⁶ Campbell, *Margaret Thatcher*, p. 771.

²¹⁷ Ibid.

²¹⁸ Margaret Thatcher Foundation, ‘Speech to CNN World Economic Development Conference’ on 19 Sept. 1992, see <http://www.margaretthatcher.org/speeches/displaydocument.asp?docid=108304> Accessed 01.07.2008

²¹⁹ Ibid, p. 6.

²²⁰ Ibid, p. 7. The exact wording ‘European Community’ is kept here, as this is a direct quote.

²²¹ Ibid, p. 7

²²² Ibid, p. 9

claim that the speech directly prompted the second Early Day Motion (EDM) in the House of Commons on 24 September 1992, which called for a ‘fresh start’ for the final ERM-withdrawal, and which 60 Tory MPs signed. However, it might have inspired the Eurosceptic members of the parliamentary Conservative Party to show their strong antipathy with the Maastricht Treaty and the ERM-mechanism that John Major had so strongly advocated.

In the ensuing House of Commons debate on 24 September Major was given a particularly hard time – the Labour Party’s leader, John Smith, attacked the economic policy of the government and John Major, saying that he was ‘a devalued prime minister of a devalued government.’²²³ Major presented the plans for the economic policy and the continued intentions to have the whole Maastricht Treaty ratified in the House of Commons, but was interrupted several times by the Eurosceptic backbenchers Teddy Taylor, Nicholas Budgen, John Wilkinson and Michael Spicer.²²⁴

According to Robert Taylor, ‘...it was the financial crisis of September 1992 that intensified conflict inside the party to breaking point over the European issue.’²²⁵ It could seem that the situation for the Conservatives went from bad to worse. John Major described it as ‘... a political and economic calamity. It unleashed havoc in the Conservative Party and it changed the political landscape in Britain. On that day, a fifth consecutive Conservative election victory, ... became remote, it not impossible.’²²⁶ The Conservative Party had up until then had a reputation for good management of the country’s economy. This reputation disappeared together with the astonishing amount of money spent by the government, through the Bank of England, in order to avoid devaluation and exit from the ERM. In the House of Commons, those who had been sceptical about Britain’s entry into the ERM were now more negative towards everything concerning the EU in general and the Maastricht Treaty in particular.

Norman Tebbit, a member of the House of Lords from the summer 1992,²²⁷ was a Thatcherite politician, attacked Major in newspaper articles and interviews with increased frequency, especially after ‘Black Wednesday.’ According to Anthony Seldon, Tebbit was on the ‘war path’, claiming that it was ‘Major who had dragged a reluctant government into the

²²³ Anthony Seldon, *Major: A Political Life* ((London: Phoenix Paperback, 1998), p. 322.

²²⁴ Seldon, *Major: A Political Life*, p. 322; Chris Gifford, *The Making of Eurosceptic Britain: Identity and Economy in a Post-Imperial State* (Aldershot, Hampshire: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2008), p. 123.

²²⁵ Robert Taylor, *John Major: 20 British Prime Ministers of the 20th Century* (London: Haus Publishing Limited, 2006), p. 63.

²²⁶ John Major, *John Major: The Autobiography* (London: HarperCollinsPublishers, 1999), p. 312.

²²⁷ Several of the politicians included in this study, have aquired a peerage or been enobled. Such titles have been excluded here to avoid confusion, since the correct titles have changed from 1990 to the time of writing.

ERM.²²⁸ Seldon also insists that Tebbit took on a leading role of speaking for the Thatcherite right when it came to criticism of John Major, almost on behalf of Thatcher, who was very busy writing her memoirs.²²⁹ Another critical voice belonged to Charles Moore, a journalist and editor of the *Sunday Telegraph* from 1992. He described ‘Black Wednesday’ and the ERM-exit “a defeat ‘almost as complete as it is possible, in peacetime, to conceive.’”²³⁰

Seven months after Thatcher’s CNN speech John Major spoke to the Conservative Group for Europe in London, on 23 April 1993. Thatcher’s vision of an Atlantic Community for free trade between European countries and North America was characterized by Major as a ‘sugar coated turnip’.²³¹ Major evidently scorned Thatcher’s idea of an Atlantic Community, or her clear preference for a wider relationship with North-America to the detriment of the EU. He also said that the Maastricht Treaty took on the role of ‘scapegoat for many and nameless fears’,²³² with a clear reference to the Eurosceptical MPs in the House of Commons or in the House of Lords. The question of Britain’s possible re-entry into the ERM continued to be contentious for the Conservative Party for many years to come after the speech.

4.1.3 The Prague Speech, May 1996

Thatcher held a controversial speech on 11 May 1996 in Prague, the Czech Republic, which was described by John Campbell as ‘her most frontal attack yet on the European Union.’²³³ She warned against ‘the overall European federalist project’ and ‘the drive towards a European superstate.’²³⁴ Thatcher talked about her nightmare vision of this future Europe that actually might emerge as a rival to the US, and used the failure in the former Yugoslavia on the EU’s behalf to end the civil war there and the EU’s dependency on NATO for military role in a future conflict.²³⁵ Thatcher stated that Europe needed the US for cooperation and protection.²³⁶

It can be argued that Thatcher’s Prague speech accentuated the public mood about the EU and the dreaded regulations that the Eurosceptic politicians had so often talked about. Britain had just experienced that British beef was banned from export to the EU market and

²²⁸ Seldon, *Major: A Political Life*, p. 320.

²²⁹ Ibid

²³⁰ Ibid.

²³¹ Ibid., p. 370.

²³² Seldon, *Major: A Political Life*, p. 370.

²³³ John Campbell, *Margaret Thatcher. Volume Two: The Iron Lady* (London: Vintage, 2008), p. 782.

²³⁴ Margaret Thatcher Foundation, Speech at The New Atlantic Initiative, (“The common crisis: Atlantic solutions”) on 11.05.1996, p. 11, see

<http://www.margaretthatcher.org/speeches/displaydocument.asp?docid=108361> Accessed 03.07.2008.

²³⁵ Ibid., p. 12.

²³⁶ Ibid.

also worldwide, due to the mad cow disease.²³⁷ Already before her resignation Thatcher had decided, according to Anthony Seldon, that ‘she would take on the entire establishment, if necessary, to halt the European federalist juggernaut. It had become her last crusade.’²³⁸ According to polls measuring British people’s opinions to the EU, it can be claimed that the British electorate gradually became more Eurosceptical. The same shift in a more anti-EU direction was also evident with the prime minister and the Conservative press. Thatcher’s influence was presumably partly responsible for this shift, although she did not accomplish this all by herself.

4.1.4 The Keith Joseph Memorial Lecture, January 1996

Thatcher attracted a lot of attention because of her Keith Joseph Memorial Lecture on 11 January 1996, titled “Liberty and Limited Government”. Keith Joseph (1918-1994) served 7 years as a member of Margaret Thatcher’s cabinet before he retired.²³⁹ He became an influential figure within the Conservative Party in the 1980s especially, with his ideas about the monetarist economy. He had a huge influence on Thatcher, and he has been credited for developing many of the ideas that can be described to constitute ‘Thatcherism’.²⁴⁰

Thatcher praised Keith Joseph claiming that Joseph and she had ‘reshaped Conservatism’ twenty years earlier.²⁴¹ They both were sceptical of letting the state take on the responsibility for too many tasks in a society, Thatcher said, and if the state alone was responsible for the welfare of each individual, the demand for more money would never stop. In no subtle language, she described the dangers of the unchecked state and said: ‘... the very *existence* of this State, with its huge capacity for evil, is a potential threat to all the moral, cultural, social and economic benefits of freedom.’²⁴² Thatcher argued that the limited government had to be the ideal.

²³⁷ Seldon, *Major: A Political Life*, pp. 639-641. The proper name is bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE). BSE was linked to the Creutzfeldt-Jakob Disease, which is a brain disease in humans.

²³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 253.

²³⁹ Keith Joseph was secretary of state for Social Services (1970-1974), secretary of state for Industry (1979-1981), and secretary of state for Education and Science (1981-1986).

²⁴⁰ N. J. Crowson, *The Longman Companion to the Conservative Party Since 1830* (Harlow and London: Pearson Education, 2001), p. 261; Norman Fowler, *A Political Suicide: The Conservatives’ Voyage into the Wilderness* (London: Politico’s Publishing, 2008), p. 220.

²⁴¹ Margaret Thatcher Foundation, Keith Joseph Memorial Lecture (“Liberty and Limited Government”) on 11 01.1996, p. 2, see: <http://www.margaretthatcher.org/speeches/displaydocument.asp?docid=108353> Accessed 01.07.2008)

²⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 4 (Thatcher’s italics in the quote).

Thatcher spoke of the ‘ratchet effect’ that would result in the further advancement of socialism. This ideology would spread indiscriminately if it was not stopped. She also referred to Hayek’s book *The Road to Serfdom*, which also was about ideologies of different civilisations in various parts of the world. In her fairly long speech she commended four Conservative MPs: Michael Portillo, Peter Lilley, Michael Howard and John Redwood.²⁴³ Lilley was praised for seeking to reduce the social security payments, Howard for combating rising crime figures, Portillo for avoiding plans for common EU military forces, and Redwood for denouncing a single currency in the EU.²⁴⁴ John Major was merely given a short mention without praise. Towards the end of her Keith Joseph Memorial Lecture, Thatcher once again criticized the Maastricht Treaty. Here is a short extract:

It wants to regulate our industries and labour markets, pontificate over our tastes, in short to determine our lives. The Maastricht Treaty, which established a common European citizenship and greatly expanded the remit of the European Commission, shows the outlines of the bureaucratic superstate which is envisaged. And Maastricht is the beginning, not the end of that process.²⁴⁵

Two of the most controversial arguments in her speech were probably about devolution and the future of the Conservative Party. Thatcher warned about Labour’s plans for devolution, and claimed that this might jeopardize the United Kingdom as a union of Scotland, Wales, England and Northern Ireland. Moreover, she dismissed the claim that the Conservatives have moved too far to the right. There was no need to go back to the ideal of ‘*One Nation* Conservatism’, according to Thatcher. She continued: “As far as I can tell by their views on European federalism, such people’s creed would be better described as ‘*No Nation* Conservatism’.”²⁴⁶

Four days before the Keith Joseph Memorial Lecture, John Major had warned of the dangers of a divided party. At the Conservative Party conference in October 1995, Major had brought up the ‘One Nation’ Conservatism as an ideal for the party to live by. Thatcher’s speech highlighted the differences within the Conservative Party, which at the time was doing much worse than the Labour Party in opinion polls.²⁴⁷ The *Independent* rendered an abbreviated version of the speech with a quote by Thatcher on the day after the KJ Memorial

²⁴³ Michael Portillo was secretary of state for defence (1995-1997), Peter Lilley was secretary of state for social security (1992-1997), Michael Howard was home secretary (1993-1997) and John Redwood was secretary of state for Wales (1993-1995).

²⁴⁴ Margaret Thatcher Foundation, Keith Joseph Memorial Lecture, p. 10.

²⁴⁵ Ibid., pp. 10-11.

²⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 6 (original emphasis).

²⁴⁷ Seldon, *Major: A Political Life*, p. 628

Lecture with the headline: “Criticism of Tory right is ‘baloney’.”²⁴⁸ The newspaper’s political correspondent John Rentoul reported the reactions from several Tory politicians as well as MPs from other parties. Their reactions were mixed, but the Conservative MPs were not delighted about Thatcher’s views. One said that she certainly would not have allowed such a display of open defiance of the party leadership, another said that this was an unwise speech from a person who did not have much political impact. John Redwood, who took part in the leadership contest in 1995, said: ‘I don’t think splits are very helpful.’²⁴⁹ Spokesman for the Liberal Democrats, Charles Kennedy, said: ‘Lady Thatcher in a no-holds barred attack on Europe and One Nation Conservatism is further blowing apart any lingering hope of Tory unity.’²⁵⁰ Robin Cook, foreign affairs spokesman in the Labour Party, said that John Major now had to decide – whether he would publicly support Thatcher’s views or oppose them.²⁵¹ The lecture was also commented on by the editor of the *Independent*, Charles Wilson. His editorial was titled “How far would you go, Maggie?”, and here he questioned Thatcher’s attack on Britain’s welfare state. Wilson warned about the ‘new strain of English nationalism’ which comes from right-wing politicians in Britain.²⁵² Attacks on the welfare state sparked public reactions from other politicians as well as commentators.

The Keith Joseph Memorial Lecture can be said to have had an indirect big impact on different political levels. The prime minister was openly challenged by his predecessor, since his vision about ‘One Nation Conservatism’ at the party conference was mocked. The future of the Conservative Party was also endangered because Thatcher’s views again might lead to new trench warfare. The party had fought for so long over the party’s policies on Europe and how far they were willing to integrate with the other EU countries. The battle over the ratification of the Maastricht Treaty had damaged the parliamentary party, and had nearly led to the resignation of the prime minister. The ‘Whipless Nine’ were back in the party fold and John Major had won the leadership contest on 4 July 1995. The last thing the party now needed, was someone or something to ruin the frail party unity that they had experienced for the last six months or so. The autumn of 1995 had seen the defections of two Conservative MPs to other parties (Alan Howarth and Emma Nicholson), and the majority in the House of Commons was only 3 in January 1996.

²⁴⁸ *The Independent*, “Criticism of Tory right is ‘baloney’”, extracts from Thatcher’s lecture, published 12.01.1996, p. 2. British Library, Newspaper Collections, Colindale, London.

²⁴⁹ John Rentoul, “Opposition revels in divisive message”, published in *The Independent*, 12.01.1996, p. 2. British Library, Newspaper Collections, Colindale, London.

²⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

²⁵¹ *Ibid.*

²⁵² Charles Wilson, “How far would you go, Maggie?”, published in the *Independent*, 12.01.1996, p. 14. British Library, Newspaper Collections, Colindale, London.

The right-wing Thatcherite politicians were presumably more pleased with Thatcher's speech than the other MPs in Parliament. The more Eurofriendly MPs were angry, and Major was reported to be furious with Thatcher in the *Sunday Telegraph* on 14 January 1996. New leadership challenges were discussed in the media, to Major's annoyance.²⁵³ The prime minister was also interviewed in *The Times*, where he defended his 'One Nation' ideology and said: 'We have been a One Nation party since the beginning of time, and we are now ... I will not be pushed off what I believe to be right'.²⁵⁴ The Conservative Party continued to struggle, partly because John Major never quite managed to establish authority over the Thatcherite backbenchers and the Eurosceptic cabinet members. The party had been and remained divided over several issues, among them the future course of the party and the single currency.

4.1.5 The Plymouth election rally speech, May 2001

Before the 2001 general election in June, Thatcher was invited by Hague to give a speech at an election meeting in Plymouth. The reason for inviting her had been to boost volunteer party workers, who would have to go out and encourage hesitant voters to participate in the election for the benefit of the Conservative Party. Hague was according to Simon Walters somewhat anxious about what Thatcher might want to speak about, and he was alerted to find out about an interview that the *Daily Mail* was going to publish on 22 May, which was the day of her speech. Thatcher rarely hesitated to speak her mind when she was given the chance to talk. In the interview she declared: 'I want a society of opportunity for all, irrespective of colour or ethnic background. But I don't wish to have what they call a multicultural society'.²⁵⁵ This statement presented the party leader with a dilemma. An undistinguished MP, John Townend, had just a few weeks earlier caused an uproar with a racist remark when he spoke about immigration in Britain. John Taylor, the first black peer in Britain, had reacted very strongly and insisted on the importance of a 'multi-racial, multicultural society'.²⁵⁶ Thatcher's remark might trigger furore among Conservatives and the electorate.

Several people were involved in discussions about Thatcher and her appearance at the election rally – whether she should be cancelled or whether the party leader should distance himself from her speech. Michael Portillo was advocating that she ought to be stopped, in order to prevent the whole election campaign be labelled racist. MPs threatened to resign the

²⁵³ Seldon, *Major: A Political Life*, p. 628.

²⁵⁴ Campbell, *Margaret Thatcher*, p.781.

²⁵⁵ Simon Walters, *Tory Wars: Conservatives in Crisis* (London: Politico's Publishing, 2001), p. 175.

²⁵⁶ Ibid.

campaign if Hague failed to back Thatcher. There was a press conference on the day of Thatcher's speech, and her remark in the *Daily Mail* about a multicultural society was not commented upon. In her speech she did not mention this potentially contentious issue. The party workers gave her a solid applause, and Hague's initiative had paid off. The crisis was averted and Hague was equally rewarded with a standing ovation.²⁵⁷

Whether Thatcher's appearance at the election rally made a difference on the results of the general election is hard to evaluate. However, Labour won the election and secured another landslide majority in the House of Commons. Her appearance at the election rally in 2001, aged 75, also contributed to remind party workers of her former success and popularity, even though she had been nearly disqualified from attending due to fears about what she might say.

Margaret Thatcher's motives for accepting all the different invitations to speak after resignation could be many. Her motivation to continue her work as politician has previously been mentioned. She did not want to retire and just opt for a quiet life outside Parliament. Thatcher stepped down as an MP in June 1992. Shortly afterwards she accepted a peerage and became Baroness Thatcher of Kesteven in the House of Lords. Her status as prime minister and a well-known statesman changed overnight when she declined to fight in the second round of the leadership contest in November 1990 and decided to resign. After a long spell as premier, Thatcher was an experienced politician who had a world-wide reputation, both for her political achievements as well as her personality. In order to continue her political life, she needed to employ staff to manage a private office as well as entertain guests in her new London home, which necessarily cost quite a lot to maintain. Several institutions invited her to speak for a considerable sum of money, which presumably were welcome contributions to enable her to develop her new career outside Parliament. In the US and the Far East she was paid to speak, whereas she spoke without gratuity in Britain, Russia, China and Hong Kong. According to Clare Beckett, the free speeches were delivered 'anywhere she felt she could have influence.'²⁵⁸ Thatcher was in other words conscious about her potential leverage.

Another motive for travelling around the world giving lectures and speeches was possibly to prove both to herself and others, that she still was popular and a much sought-after speaker. Presumably she did not feel the need to prove this; her previous role as prime minister and political icon, according to some supporters, gave her the opportunity to just do it. The number of speeches that Thatcher held seems to be substantial. However, many were

²⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 180.

²⁵⁸ Clare Beckett, *Margaret Thatcher* (London: Haus Publishing, 2006), p. 114.

quite similar because they included many the same issues, even though they would to some degree seem to be tailor-made for the occasion. On 22 March 2002 Thatcher issued a statement announcing that public speaking had to be abandoned due to bad health.²⁵⁹

4.2: Democracy in Hong Kong and support for British firms in Asia

Hong Kong had become a British colony in 1841. In 1898 an agreement between China and Britain was signed, stating that Hong Kong was to be handed over to China after a 99-year lease. 1997 was the agreed year that China would again be in charge of several islands comprising Hong Kong. In the 1992 general election Christopher Patten lost the Conservative seat of his Bath constituency. Patten was described to have provided the intellectual framework for the policies of the first Major government. The position he agreed to accept, was to be the last governor of Hong Kong. Even though Patten was no Thatcherite, he had Thatcher's full support from the moment he had settled in his new job.²⁶⁰

Patten's challenge was to secure a smooth transition for the colony and to establish democratic institutions to prevent China from nationalizing private companies and corporations. In any event, a mass flight of professionals from the colony was not a desirable outcome. Hong Kong had become a centre of finance, commerce and industry in Asia since the end of the Second World War, and leaders of foreign companies feared the Chinese takeover. China had committed herself to maintain Hong Kong's 'social and economic freedom and capitalistic lifestyle' for a guaranteed 50-year period, according to the Joint Agreement between Britain and China, signed in Beijing in 1984.²⁶¹

Since Thatcher had committed Britain in this bilateral agreement, she felt a responsibility to see it through. She spent quite a lot of her time to visit Hong Kong and to discreetly exert her influence. At a critical moment in March 1995 she solved a diplomatic crisis that had arisen over the Hong Kong gold reserves. The Chinese government had falsely assumed that the British would take the gold reserves with them at the moment of departure in 1997. Thatcher travelled to Hong Kong to settle the matter, in full agreement with Chris Patten and John Major, and managed to do so with some finesse.²⁶² She was still critical of

²⁵⁹ Margaret Thatcher Foundation, "Statement on MT's health (abandons public speaking)", 22.03.2002; see <http://www.margaretthatcher.org/speeches/browse.asp?t=6> Accessed 26.06.2008

²⁶⁰ Campbell, *Margaret Thatcher*, p. 773.

²⁶¹ *Dictionary of World History*, s. v. 'Hong Kong', (Helicon Publishing Ltd 1994, new edition published by Brockhampton Press Ltd., 1997), pp. 271-272.

²⁶² Campbell, *Margaret Thatcher*, p. 774.

China's undemocratic ways of treating political opponents, and she did not waver to get her point of view across to the Chinese Prime Minister Li Peng.²⁶³

As John Campbell points out, this exemplifies that Thatcher still could make an impact on a political issue.²⁶⁴ It illustrates that she did not necessarily always behave in a stubborn or menacing way when it came to foreign policy matters, which might be the stereotype image of Margaret Thatcher that was emphasized by her opponents and rendered in hundreds of articles in newspapers and other media. Her efforts in Hong Kong were less controversial than her behaviour on the domestic scene.

Thatcher exerted her influence in several Asian countries that she visited after having resigned. The countries with the fastest growing economies, like Taiwan, South Korea, Singapore, Thailand, and Japan welcomed Thatcher to speak to businessmen and political leaders. The American Citibank organized conventions for political leaders and companies all over the Far East. Thatcher was invited to join in the conventions from 1992, and she managed to divide her time between the formal engagement for Citibank and more personal involvement on behalf of British companies based in the Far East. These companies profited on her lobbying efforts, while Thatcher enjoyed the extra income.²⁶⁵ If British companies abroad are promoted and given publicity in order to win contracts, this can create jobs in Britain as well as public revenue and a higher GDP. Indirectly, Thatcher's contribution to British firms based in the Far East might have a political impact, even though it is hard to estimate how much this might be worth. If many British companies are successful abroad, they pave the way for other companies to establish themselves in other parts of the world.

4.3: Book publications and their impact

The motivation for Margaret Thatcher to agree to a deal to write about her years in 10 Downing Street could be that she was offered a substantial sum for it. John Campbell argues that Mark Thatcher, her son, sought to negotiate an extravagant deal, which failed to materialize, and that the final agreed sum of £3.5 million for the two volumes was a lot less than originally expected.²⁶⁶ In addition, she was presumably very intent on writing her own version of her 11 years as prime minister and making sure that her legacy was properly secured for the future. She signed up for publishing two volumes of her memoirs; the first

²⁶³ Ibid.

²⁶⁴ Ibid.

²⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 775.

²⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 756.

about her years as Britain's prime minister, the second about her years in politics before she was appointed by the Queen to lead the government. The third book which was published in 2002 summed up her reflections regarding statecraft.

4.3.1 *The Downing Street Years*

This 900-page book gave a fairly detailed account of what Thatcher had done in the period 1979-1990, sometimes explaining political processes, occasionally quoting from important speeches. Thatcher talked about the fatal leadership election in 1990, and seemed to distance herself from supporting John Major as her chosen successor. She spoke of the possible leadership candidates that were a generation younger than her, and therefore the most eligible: '... there was a variety of possible candidates who ought to be tested in high office: John Major, Douglas Hurd, Ken Baker, Ken Clarke, Chris Patten and perhaps Norman Lamont and Michael Howard.'²⁶⁷ Then she rather ruefully added about her cabinet ministers:²⁶⁸ '... I believed that they had generally become convinced of the rightness of the basic principles as I had. Orthodox finance, low levels of regulation and taxation, a minimal bureaucracy, strong defence, a willingness to stand up for British interests wherever and whenever threatened - ...'²⁶⁹ Thatcher stated that she had not been sure about Major as her successor, or at least this was the case at the time of the cabinet reshuffle in July 1989, when Major was appointed foreign secretary.²⁷⁰

John Campbell claimed that *The Downing Street Years* was 'a shockingly ungenerous book', because nearly all the politicians and staff who had worked with Thatcher, were all heavily criticized; except her husband Denis, and her former cabinet members Willie Whitelaw and Keith Joseph. Her private secretary and chief press secretary were also spared. The BBC had produced a mini-series called *The Downing Street Years* which was shown in October and November 1993.²⁷¹ This series revealed 'the unrelenting force of her personality', according to Campbell.²⁷² The book and the TV series was a part of her legacy and presumably how she saw herself and her past political colleagues, and it said a lot about her personality as well as her achievements.

²⁶⁷ Margaret Thatcher, *The Downing Street Years* (London: HarperCollinsPublishers, 1993), p. 755.

²⁶⁸ All persons named in the previous sentence were members of Thatcher's last cabinet July 1989-November 1990, except Michael Howard.

²⁶⁹ Thatcher, *The Downing Street Years*, p. 755.

²⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 757.

²⁷¹ Campbell, *Margaret Thatcher*, p. 776.

²⁷² Ibid., p. 777.

The Downing Street Years was to be published in October 1993, and both *Daily Mirror* and *The Times* were able to reveal snippets from the book on 5 and 6 October, respectively, in the week of the party conference. The conference went quite well for John Major, who talked little about the EU and sounded less intent to please his European partners than he had been in 1991 in his 'Britain at the heart of Europe speech' in Germany. He said: 'So let me say to some of our European colleagues, You're playing with fires. Or, to put it more bluntly, Get your tractors off our lawn.' He also discussed the challenges for international trade and stated: 'At present, Europe, our biggest market, is stuck deep in recession. It's held back by social costs it can't afford.'²⁷³ Major's Eurosceptic tone was also echoed by several others. The Eurosceptic MP Bill Cash had established the think-tank European Foundation in 1993, and several members shared their Eurosceptic views at the conference.²⁷⁴

Several Conservative Party delegates were not too pleased with their former prime minister and what she had written in the *Downing Street Years*. Many of them had a personal reason to feel offended, others might have been put off because of the apparent disloyalty conveyed in the book – both to the party and also to the present prime minister. As a direct consequence of the leaked sections from the memoirs, Thatcher received a muted ovation at the conference. Some delegates refused to stand when she arrived, according to Anthony Seldon.²⁷⁵ The displeasure was only to become bigger when the whole book was published.

Thatcher appeared on *Breakfast with Frost* on 17 October 1993 to promote her book. She had criticized Major in her memoirs, claiming that he '... intellectually ... was drifting with the tide', when she described his views of the EU in general.²⁷⁶ In the interview she stated that Major "... was now back on 'the true path of Conservatism'".²⁷⁷ Thatcher gave many interviews to different media, she signed her book, and she also went to the US and Japan to promote her book which sold well, both in hardcover and even better in the paperback edition.²⁷⁸ Several former members of Thatcher's cabinets had already published their memoirs; for instance Nigel Lawson, Kenneth Baker, Norman Tebbit, Nicholas Ridley and more were to come later on.²⁷⁹ Prominent former ministers were invited to review

²⁷³ Contact Bodleian Library, University of Oxford, Conservative Party Archive, Department of Special Collections and Western Manuscripts, see: <http://www.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/dept/scwmss/cpa>.

²⁷⁴ Steve Ludlam and Martin Smith, eds., *Contemporary British Conservatism* (London: Macmillan Press Ltd., 1999), p. 114.

²⁷⁵ Seldon, *Major: A Political Life*, p. 403.

²⁷⁶ Campbell, *Margaret Thatcher*, p. 776.

²⁷⁷ Ibid.

²⁷⁸ Ibid., p. 777.

²⁷⁹ All these memoirs were published during the years 1991-1993.

Thatcher's book in newspapers and magazines in November 1993; they were Geoffrey Howe, Nigel Lawson and Douglas Hurd.²⁸⁰ This again illustrates the interest for Thatcher's book. However, the criticism and the depreciation asserted in the book was enhanced by the publicity that Thatcher got in interviews and on book promotion tours. Many Conservative newspapers were sympathetic with Thatcher and her Eurosceptic views. They also tended to criticize John Major's way of governing the country. This was probably a contributing factor to explain the publicity that Thatcher was able to enjoy, and the Conservative press presented a sounding board for Thatcher's ideas. This is somewhat discussed in chapter 5.

4.3.2 The Path to Power

The Path to Power was about Margaret Thatcher's childhood and the start of her career as a politician until the 1979 general election, when she became prime minister. When it was published in May 1995, it attracted even more attention than the first book had, probably due to the fact that Thatcher had included a part about the last four and a half years since her resignation. Her criticism of John Major's policies was reinforced, and the issues that she emphasized were the EU policy, Britain's efforts in the war in Yugoslavia, and the government spending that had increased since she left office.²⁸¹ The *Sunday Times* printed passages from the book, with the headline "Thatcher launches savage attack on Major's misguided policies."²⁸² The newspaper apparently took Thatcher's side when reviewing the Conservative government's performance at the time.

Simon Jenkins in *The Times*, however, took a different view of the book. His headline was "The ghost of Margaret Thatcher is once again howling along the corridors of Westminster".²⁸³ He mounted a defence for John Major, claiming that he had carried on Thatcher's policies quite loyally, only changing what needed to be changed, and that Major 'had actually been a better Thatcherite than Lady Thatcher herself.'²⁸⁴ Since two broadsheet newspapers contributed to a debate on the legacy of Margaret Thatcher and her criticism of her successor, it can be seen to illustrate Thatcher's influence more than four years after her resignation. She was still able to initiate a discussion and indirectly this enhanced the sale of her book.

²⁸⁰ Campbell, *Margaret Thatcher*, p. 777. Howe's review was published in *The Financial Times*, Lawson's in the *Evening Standard*, and Hurd's in the *Spectator*.

²⁸¹ Campbell, *Margaret Thatcher*, p. 778.

²⁸² Ibid.

²⁸³ Ibid.

²⁸⁴ Ibid.

Thatcher was busy going on book promotion tours and giving interviews at the launch of *The Path to Power*. One of the issues that she felt strongly about was the withdrawal of the whip from eight Tory MPs because they abstained in a crucial vote in November 1994, on the Second Reading of the European Communities (Finance Bill). This had been made a vote of confidence by Major, who wanted to avoid defeat. Major's decision was regarded as controversial, both in the House of Commons and in the media. Those who supported the Eurosceptic MPs generally condemned the withdrawal of the whip. The 'Whipless Nine' arranged numerous press conferences and voiced their criticism of the Conservative government and John Major's EU policies, and they continued to pose a threat to the government's survival in the House of Commons.²⁸⁵ On 24 April 1995 the whip was restored to the eight MPs that originally lost it, and they were accepted back as members of the parliamentary Conservative Party without any punitive measures from the Whips or their constituencies.²⁸⁶ Thatcher had advocated her support for the 'Whipless Nine' since the incident and for an immediate restoration of the whip.²⁸⁷

Furthermore, on the book promotion tours, Thatcher claimed that the Conservatives suffered defeat in opinion polls because they were 'not being Conservative enough'.²⁸⁸ She also wanted to see law and order restored and she attacked the welfare state system in Britain.²⁸⁹ Thatcher stated her intentions for guiding people to the right policies '... on Europe, the wider international scene, social policy and the economy.'²⁹⁰ In *The Path to Power* Thatcher encouraged those unhappy with Major's policies and leadership to do something about it by saying: 'I offer some thoughts about putting these things right. It is now, however, for others to take the action required.'²⁹¹ The quotation seemed to echo the words in Geoffrey Howe's resignation speech, when he encouraged someone to act because of his dissatisfaction with the then present leader (i.e. Margaret Thatcher). Now Thatcher indicated that the time had come for the party to choose a new leader.²⁹²

On 21 July 1994 Tony Blair succeeded John Smith as leader of the Labour Party, after Smith's sudden death the previous month. In *The Path to Power* it became clear that Thatcher

²⁸⁵ Eight MPs had their whip removed and one MP withdrew the whip voluntarily to support the other eight; see Peter Dorey, ed., *The Major Premiership*, London, Macmillan Press Ltd, 1999, p. 252.

²⁸⁶ Richard Body had his whip restored in January 1996.

²⁸⁷ Campbell, *Margaret Thatcher*, p. 778.

²⁸⁸ Ibid.

²⁸⁹ Ibid. See also Thatcher's Keith Joseph Memorial Lecture in 1996.

²⁹⁰ Campbell, *Margaret Thatcher*, p. 778.

²⁹¹ Thatcher, *The Path to Power*, p. 469.

²⁹² Philip Webster, "Tory leaders play down Thatcher's praise for Blair", in *The Times*, 29.05.1995, p. 2. British Library, Newspaper Collections, Colindale, London.

thought very highly of Tony Blair, to the embarrassment of several Tory politicians. Her praise did not exactly make matters easier for John Major, who clearly was not as highly esteemed by the former premier. There was speculation in *The Times* published on 29 May 1995 about Thatcher's praise for Tony Blair and her attacks on John Major, resulting in the conclusion that she thought it was time for Major to go.²⁹³

However, Thatcher stated on 12 June that she would urge people to vote for Major in an eventual leadership challenge in an article in *The Times*.²⁹⁴ Speculation was ripe in the media and among politicians. According to party rules, the party leader can announce a leadership contest after the opening of a new session of Parliament or this can take place within the first three months after a general election. The opportunity for a leadership contest is limited to take place once a year.²⁹⁵ The timing of the next event took many by surprise.

Only a month after the publication of *The Path to Power*, John Major did something unprecedented in terms of an incumbent prime minister. He resigned and declared a leadership contest, where he would be one of the contenders. This can be interpreted as a direct consequence of Thatcher's latest book and all its negative claims about the present government. There had been frequent discussions about a possible change of leader since Major took office, and Thatcher was only one of many who had criticized him.

Major launched his 'Put up or shut up' campaign, inviting political challengers to step forward, or alternatively stop voicing their disapproving comments on the present prime minister and his policies. Major had recently met rebellious backbenchers at a meeting with the Fresh Start group just before he resigned. According to an article in the *Daily Telegraph* published 3 July 1995, Major blamed Europe to be the cause of the criticism above anything else.²⁹⁶ Assumedly he meant the EU and the ongoing debates in the House of Commons that nearly split the Conservative Party. Thatcher had contributed to the debate with her new book, scorning Major and his policies.

John Redwood, secretary of state for Wales, resigned his post to stand for election as leader of the Conservative Party. Other possible contenders were Norman Lamont and Michael Portillo. Alan Clark describes in his book how George Gardiner, chairman of the '92 Group', changed his mind before the leadership election. He had previously urged Norman Lamont to stand, but shortly before the vote he decided to back John Redwood instead. It is

²⁹³ Ibid.

²⁹⁴ Seldon, *Major: A Political Life*, p. 564.

²⁹⁵ Robert Garner and Richard Kelly, *British political parties today* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998), p. 80.

²⁹⁶ Ludlam and Smith., *Contemporary British Conservatism*, p. 120.

quite likely that most members of the '92 Group' voted for Redwood also, on Gardiner's recommendation, and they constituted around 80 members at the time.²⁹⁷ Portillo seemed to hesitate whether to stand or not in the first ballot, although it was reported that he actually had forty extra telephone lines installed after the leadership contest was announced.²⁹⁸ It seemed likely that he wanted to stand, but he apparently had second thoughts about his candidacy or participation.

On 4 July 1995 there were only two contestants; John Major and John Redwood. Major received 218 votes, Redwood 89, whereas 22 voters abstained.²⁹⁹ Major won with a clear majority, but still there were nearly one third of the Conservative MPs who had not voted for him. Major was clearly aware what this number signalled; even though he had secured a solid win, his adversaries constituted a solid opposition and could possibly still continue their rebellious behaviour in the House of Commons. Alan Clark described the mood after the election had taken place: 'So in the immediate aftermath of the contest the party remained unhappy. A large number among them had wanted, and others had deluded themselves that they wanted, to displace John Major. But who with? They were never agreed.'³⁰⁰ Ian Pendlington wrote about the outcome of the leadership contest, and supported Clark's views on the lack of success in July: '... it did nothing to stifle critics on both sides of a European debate that had caused a division too deep within the party to be resolved with a change of leader.'³⁰¹

Thatcher, who had been fairly ambiguous about who she wanted as party leader was perhaps unhappy with the outcome of the leadership election as well. Although she had publicly supported Major in June, her *Path to Power* indicated that she was far from impressed by Major, and that she encouraged other politicians to take on the challenge as a leader.

4.3.3: Thatcher's last book *Statecraft*

Thatcher's third book, *Statecraft: Strategies for a Changing World*, was published in 2002, and it managed to make the headlines as well. Thatcher stated in the introduction of the book

²⁹⁷ Alan Clark, *The Tories: Conservatives and the Nation State 1922-1997* (London: Phoenix, 1999, first published 1998), p. 518.

²⁹⁸ Seldon, *Major: A political Life*, p. 581.

²⁹⁹ David Butler and Gareth Butler, *British Political Facts since 1979* (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), p. 46.

³⁰⁰ Clark, *The Tories*, p. 521.

³⁰¹ Ian Pendlington, "Put up or shut up", in the *Conservative History Journal*, issue 5, autumn 2005, pp. 16-17.

that her motivation for writing it had changed because of the terrorist attacks on the Twin Towers on 11 September 2001. She propagated the importance of defence, of national security and of vigilance when it comes to intelligence. Again she repeated the claim that spending on welfare had been too high.³⁰²

Most of the chapters in the book are linked to foreign policy and issues related to different parts of the world. It is a non-fiction book which is based on a lot of facts, although it clearly presents a subjective point of view. Two chapters which focus on the European Union and Britain's role in Europe were serialised in *The Times*. Thatcher wrote admiringly about the American support that Europe had enjoyed for a long time, especially since World War Two. The real controversy commenced in her descriptions of the EU. She wrote: 'Europe as a whole is fundamentally unreformable.'³⁰³ Her relentless attack continued: 'Each new global development ... has served as a spur to create a politically united Europe. We are at or very near the point of no return.'³⁰⁴ The chapter called 'Europe – Dreams and Nightmares' spelled out the threat of further integration:

*What we should grasp, however, from the lessons of European history is that, first, there is nothing necessarily benevolent about programmes of European integration; second, the desire to achieve grand utopian plans often poses a grave threat to freedom; and third, European unity has been tried before, and the outcome was far from happy.*³⁰⁵

Thatcher actually advocated that Britain should withdraw from the EU and join the North American Free Trade Area instead. This point of view aroused fierce controversy in the House of Commons and also in the Conservative Party. The party carried out a poll to examine whether Conservative constituency chairmen supported Thatcher or not. A clear majority of 71 per cent did not support her, and many claimed that this time she had gone too far.³⁰⁶

As a direct consequence of the *Statecraft* publication together with the serialisation in *The Times*, the leader of the Conservative Party Iain Duncan Smith was confronted by Tony Blair, then prime minister, to say whether Duncan Smith supported Thatcher's views. Duncan Smith did not denounce Thatcher, but there were others who did, among them Francis Maude,

³⁰² Margaret Thatcher, *Statecraft: Strategies for a Changing World* (Great Britain: HarperCollins Publishers, 2002), p. xxv.

³⁰³ Ibid., p. 321.

³⁰⁴ Ibid., p. 322.

³⁰⁵ Ibid., p. 327.

³⁰⁶ Campbell, *Margaret Thatcher*, p. 797.

who responded furiously, according to an article in *The Times* on 22 March 2002. He contradicted her anti-EU conviction, and launched a counter-attack:

The 'negative caricature' promoted by 'small-minded, xenophobic and bickering Little Englanders' made it much more difficult for the Conservatives to engage in the great debate about the future of the European Union. ... We do not believe it was wrong for Britain to join the EU. We do not believe that mainland Europe has been the source of all evil.³⁰⁷

A few days later Thatcher retracted from further public debate due to bad health because of her doctor's advice. She continued to make a few appearances, but she refrained from saying much. Iain Duncan Smith continued to advocate a Eurosceptic agenda in the House of Commons emphasizing the danger of the bureaucratic EU that only spelled disaster if further integration was pursued, in other words the same as Thatcher had warned against.³⁰⁸

The publication of Thatcher's memoirs in 1993 and 1995, as well as her book *Statecraft* in 2002, all received a lot of attention in the media. The timing of the book releases made sure that the books were much talked about. The other aspect that also contributed to this was Thatcher's claims about the present government, her successor, about the Conservative Party and many of her political enemies. She could have decided to avoid confrontation or to expose the Conservative Party's internal squabbles publicly. This was not on Thatcher's agenda. On the contrary, she wanted to highlight the discussions and present her views and vision for the future, possibly believing that she was in the right and that other people would eventually change their minds if they disagreed with her. Presumably she did not intend to cause any difficulty to the Conservative Party with her books, it is possible that she just wanted to contribute to putting things straight by confronting the controversial issues. If her books escalated the Conservative Party's problems, she probably regarded that as an unavoidable consequence; something slightly uncomfortable or undesirable, nevertheless worthwhile in order 'to put matters right'.

4.4: Influential articles, their timing and effect

Only three articles written by Margaret Thatcher have been selected for examination. All of them were published in 1992 – two of them in American publications and the third in a short-lived British newspaper. Thatcher apparently enjoyed making speeches more than writing

³⁰⁷ Ibid. (Campbell's text is copied as it is rendered in his book. Campbell partly has quoted Francis Maude and has used some of his own words in-between).

³⁰⁸ Duncan Smith only served as party leader for two years until 2003.

articles, because she did not have many articles published. The selected articles were arguably quite influential when they were published.

4.4.1 “The autumn of our discontent” in *The European*, October 1992

Coinciding with the Conservative Party conference in 1992 in Brighton, an article written by Margaret Thatcher was published on 8 October in the newspaper *The European*. Its headline was followed by this introductory statement: ‘As the Conservative Party conference reveals deep divisions over Maastricht, Thatcher says why she sees the treaty as an outdated vision of Europe.’³⁰⁹

Thatcher’s highly critical views on the Major government were given two pages’ coverage, and the article soon made the headlines of all the other media.³¹⁰ The themes of the article were the ERM, economic policy, the European Union with its goals of political, social and economic union for its member countries. One sentence that has been often quoted is this: ‘Although the final decision for Britain to cease issuing sterling would rest with the House of Commons, we would be on the conveyor belt to a single currency, committed to each stage preceding it.’³¹¹ Thatcher wrote about the two alternative visions of Europe as she saw it; one federalist Europe being run by Brussels – that could be seen as a sort of ‘United States of Europe’. The other vision was a Europe that continued to be constituted by independent sovereign countries that could co-operate in their trade as well as keeping up a good relationship with the United States, ‘Europe’s great friend and protector’. Thatcher stressed the need for the Conservative Party to ‘be united, not torn apart’.

The timing of this article was probably no coincidence. The conference planned to discuss the party’s policies on Europe, and Thatcher stage-managed herself to play a leading role, even though she was supposed to stay quiet during the conference week. In addition, she managed to create negative publicity over the Conservative Party, and the declared desired party unity had been attacked or possibly consciously ruined. Thatcher did not achieve this all on her own. There were several other Tory MPs who also did their very best presenting their apparent disdain for the Maastricht Treaty in television interviews during the conference week.³¹²

³⁰⁹ Margaret Thatcher, “The autumn of our discontent” in *The European* on 8-11 October 1992, pp. 8-9. British Library, Newspaper Collections, Colindale, London.

³¹⁰ Fowler, *A Political Suicide*, p. 134.

³¹¹ Margaret Thatcher Foundation, Article for *The European* (Maastricht) on 08.10.1992, see <http://www.margaretthatcher.org/speeches/displaydocument.asp?docid=108305> Accessed 07.07.2008

³¹² Fowler, *A Political Suicide*, p. 131.

A part of the article was about the Maastricht Treaty issue which was contentious – especially in Parliament, but it gained momentum in the electorate as the years went by. Many voters did not care too much about the Maastricht Treaty and the single currency issue in 1992. Most of the debate seemed to take place in the House of Commons or in the House of Lords, and the electorate in general did not think that the issue mattered to them. The Maastricht Treaty in itself was regarded as quite complex to understand, and only a small number of people bothered to read it thoroughly. Some of the Eurosceptical politicians, on the other hand, had scrutinized it and found objectionable implications for Britain. In fact, they felt that Britain’s future as an independent and sovereign country was at stake. As previously mentioned, on 3 June there was an Early Day Motion for a ‘fresh start’ on the Maastricht Treaty, which was signed by 69 MPs as a direct consequence of the result of the Danish referendum.³¹³ This was seen as the moment when the whole treaty might be rejected – since all the EU countries had to ratify it in order for it to be valid. The Danes had a second referendum in May 1993, and this time the majority voted in favour of it.³¹⁴ Later on, the issues of the referendum and the single currency were still strongly debated in the House of Commons. The immaculate timing of *The European* article seems quite shrewd, if the aim was to attract media publicity. It might also have influenced the discussions that took place at the party conference.

4.4.2 “Don’t Undo My Work” in *Newsweek*, April 1992

This critical article was published on 27 April 1992 in the American magazine *Newsweek*. The accompanying subtitle was: “I Don’t Accept The Idea That All Of A Sudden Major Is His Own Man”.³¹⁵ Here Thatcher condemned the economic policies of the government as well as the increased controls or powers of the state. She warned Major against government intervention in industry and she advocated restrictions in public spending. In regard to spending on welfare programs, she wanted to focus on the duties that should accompany benefits or support. Thatcher wrote about the spirit of enterprise which according to her needed promotion. Thatcher also attacked John Major’s personality and his desire for

³¹³ Hugo Young, *This Blessed Plot: Britain and Europe from Churchill to Blair* (New York: The Overlook Press, 1999), p. 393. (The number of MPs supporting the EDM varies; see ch.6, Fresh Start)

³¹⁴ Ruth Lea, *The Essential Guide to the European Union*, (Centre for Policy Studies, 2004), p. 142. Bodleian Library in Oxford, Special Collections, Conservative Party Archive, 186/17.

³¹⁵ Margaret Thatcher, “Don’t Undo My Work” in *Newsweek*, 27.04.1992. See www.newsweek.com/id/125615/output/print Accessed 06.06.2008

consensus in the parliamentary Conservative Party. She described consensus as lack of principle; which she deplored. Instead she wanted to restore the ‘great principles’.

Considering the time of publication, Thatcher’s motive for writing this article seems somewhat uncertain. It was published just after the 1992 general election, which against all odds the Conservative Party had won, getting a small majority in the House of Commons. It is possible that she felt vindictive, and possibly a little jealous of Major, who now could continue as prime minister. The effect of Thatcher’s attacks on Major was wearing him down. A Downing Street employee was quoted in Campbell’s book, describing how Major felt about the attacks from Thatcher: ‘The devil was in the drip feed, the constant gnawing away at him.’³¹⁶ Arguably Thatcher still had not come to terms with her new destiny and the way she left office. After the general election it is plausible that she felt free to criticize Major, since the Conservative Party continued with a majority in the House of Commons.

4.4.3 “Stop the excuses. Help Bosnia now” in *New York Times*, August 1992

When Yugoslavia disintegrated in 1991 and experienced the call from the different republics to become independent countries, civil war broke out. Thatcher by then had resigned as premier, but her concern for what happened in Europe was undiminished. She vociferously advocated her support for the republics that wanted sovereignty. The first republics in the former Yugoslavia to declare their independence were Slovenia and Croatia. Soon afterwards Bosnia followed suit.

According to the article which was published on 6 August 1992, Thatcher was furious about the apparent unwillingness by the West to get involved in order to stop the ‘ethnic cleansing’ that was taking place in Bosnia. An arms embargo had been placed by the UN, which Thatcher found intolerable, since this meant that the Bosnians were increasingly unable to defend themselves against the Serbs. Thatcher called for American intervention, through NATO, since the EU was unable or unwilling to get involved militarily.³¹⁷ Despite the celebrated ‘special relationship’ that Britain and the US had enjoyed especially after the Second World War, Thatcher’s article in the *New York Times* did not lead to the American involvement that Thatcher apparently was hoping to achieve. According to Anthony Seldon,

³¹⁶ Campbell, *Margaret Thatcher*, p.255.

³¹⁷ Margaret Thatcher Foundation, Article for *New York Times*, (“Stop the excuses. Help Bosnia Now”) on 06.08.1992, see <http://www.margarethatcher.org/speeches/displaydocument.asp?docid=108299> Accessed 01.07.2008

Thatcher was naïve in her attempt to influence the Americans. The only concessions that she managed to get, were from President George Bush (senior) and former secretary of state James Baker, declaring that they regarded the civil war in Yugoslavia to be a matter to be solved by the Europeans. They supported Thatcher as far as saying that the Serb aggression had to be met by 'tough action'.³¹⁸

Some of the ministers in the Major cabinet strongly opposed British intervention, as did some of the Tory backbenchers. The Conservative MPs were divided on the issue of Bosnia. John Major and Douglas Hurd reacted strongly against Thatcher's initiative.³¹⁹ Maybe the resentment stems from the debate that followed in the newspapers and other media, where reactions from the British politicians governing the country were called for. The Major government was forced to respond to non-governmental 'interference' in public from a formidable force in the shape of Margaret Thatcher, instead of concentrating on policies in the House of Commons. The role of the newspapers will be discussed in chapter 5.

4.5: Interviews and articles about Margaret Thatcher

A few interview and articles have been selected because of the issues they covered, in order to further illustrate how Thatcher was given ample media coverage to voice her opinion on current political matters. Naturally, she had a lot of valuable knowledge about many political aspects, after having spent so many years in government. Usually the themes were related to foreign policy or the EU, as other chapters also have demonstrated.

Thatcher described herself as a conviction politician – presumably she remained as convicted when she stepped down as an MP and intended to use all the available channels to continue fighting for what she believed was right. Politics had consumed her life since she was elected in 1959 as an MP for Finchley. She was probably aware that her statements were put under close scrutiny by British journalists and commentators, in addition to local media on her many travels. Her speeches and public statements were not necessarily exclusively tailored for the British press, but on the other hand it is quite likely that she was aware of the attention she commanded also after her resignation in 1990. Several journalists appreciated that she frequently gave them clear policy statements in addition to the occasional hint of criticism about her successor, John Major.

³¹⁸ Seldon, *Major: A Political Life*, pp. 305-306.

³¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 306.

The issue of a British referendum on the Maastricht Treaty and a single currency was recurring quite frequently in statements by Thatcher, both in Parliament and in other forums. On the TV-show *Frost on Sunday* on 28 June 1992 Thatcher called for a referendum on the Maastricht Treaty. She echoed Michael Spicer and described the Maastricht Treaty as a treaty too far. Spicer had written *A Treaty Too Far: a new policy for Europe* the same year. In Denmark the Maastricht Treaty was subject to a referendum on 2 June 1992, and the result was a narrow defeat (50.7 to 49.3 per cent voted against).³²⁰ Thatcher insisted on the need for a British referendum and announced her intention of voting against the treaty in the House of Lords.³²¹ There was actually a vote in the House of Commons whether a referendum should take place in Britain on 22 April 1993. The motion was defeated 363-124.³²²

The referendum issue became pivotal for Thatcher, as for a number of Eurosceptic politicians. On 28 July 1996, her affection for the Referendum Party was cited in the *Sunday Telegraph*, in addition to a claim that she would not fight for the Conservative Party in the next general election in any constituency where the Referendum Party also fought for a seat.³²³ On 31 August the *Guardian* had an article which stated that Thatcher actually intended to defect the Conservative Party and support the Referendum Party instead. Rumours were rendered about Thatcher's high regard for James Goldsmith, founder of the Referendum Party. It later turned out that the last article had no valid source.³²⁴

Thatcher was asked on 18 April 1997, shortly before the 1997 general election, whether she supported the single currency. Her answer was short and decisive: 'Good heavens. No! I was the one who invented the answer, no, No, NO!'³²⁵ Thatcher had promised the party chairman to avoid controversial statements in the count-down to the general election, but was tempted to react spontaneously when she was interviewed while she was out shopping. The millionaire Paul Sykes took part in the election campaign, supporting constituencies that were pronouncing their stand against the single currency. He did not necessarily do this because Thatcher had stated her aversion against it. However, his contribution weighed in, persuading people in a manner that could be compared to paying a bribe in order to support a political course.

There were several ministers in Major's cabinet who were seen as 'Europhile', or more in favour of the increased European integration as well as a single currency, among

³²⁰ Young, *This Blessed Plot*, p. 393.

³²¹ Campbell, *Margaret Thatcher*, p. 768.

³²² Seldon, *Major: A Political Life*, p. 370.

³²³ Ibid., p. 663.

³²⁴ Ibid., p. 671.

³²⁵ Ibid., p. 726.

them Michael Heseltine (deputy prime minister 1995-97) and Kenneth Clarke (chancellor 1993-97). The Conservative Party conflict was out in the open once more, with the old wounds from the Maastricht debates and the division evident for all to see. Clarke had an outburst on 19 April 1997, where he spoke of the controversy over the EU, “ ... calling the idea that the EU posed a threat to Europe ‘paranoid nonsense’.”³²⁶ There were others too, who joined the debate in the newspapers. Teddy Taylor, a dedicated Eurosceptic, talked about the battle against European federalism.³²⁷ In the election campaign the Labour Party decided that they were in favour of a referendum on the issue of the single currency, and this made it even harder for the Conservative Party not to have a clear stand. Thatcher was not the only contributor in this fight, but she was in no doubt about her view on the subject. The Conservative government was led by a divided cabinet, with a seemingly wavering prime minister who did not want to cause any ministerial resignations over the issue. Thatcher’s speeches in Washington, Prague and The Hague together with her TV interview and her *European* article added to the controversy in the Conservative Party with strong disagreement regarding the British EU policy.

Thatcher was invited to present her views by the BBC on television on several occasions. She appeared on 13 April 1993, when she criticized the British government in general, and foreign secretary Douglas Hurd in particular.³²⁸ He had previously stated that if the arms embargo was lifted, it would create ‘a level killing field’. Thatcher dissociated herself from this phrase, labelling it ‘terrible and disgraceful.’³²⁹ She again condemned the EU and said: ‘We have been a little like an accomplice to massacre.’³³⁰ Martyn Lewis asked whether she would pinpoint this characterization to John Major personally, but this she refused to do.³³¹ The choice of words used by Thatcher is somewhat typical of how she often spoke publicly, both in office and later. It seems that she relished in conflicts where she could take a clear stand for or against, and then she could advocate her views without paying too much attention to the small nuances or reservations that experienced politicians often learn to include when they argue something in a public debate.

The impact of her TV interview in 1993 could be that she actually managed to highlight the terrible situation in Yugoslavia. However, some people think that simplified

³²⁶ Ibid.

³²⁷ Ibid.

³²⁸ Margaret Thatcher Foundation, TV Interview for BBC (attacks British policy towards Bosnia) on 13.04.1993; see <http://www.margaretthatcher.org/speeches/displaydocument.asp?docid=110821> Accessed 01.07.2008

³²⁹ Ibid.

³³⁰ Ibid.

³³¹ Ibid.

characterizations and hyperbole only serve to intensify a conflict, since the issue probably can be seen from different sides and can be argued differently.. When Thatcher talked about people being ‘accomplice to massacre’ it was a statement probably intended to shock. Most people would strongly reject the proposition that they are indirectly supporting that a massacre is taking place, and they react at strong accusations like that. Thatcher’s contribution could be seen to make it harder for the government to find a long-term solution in agreement with other European countries as well as elsewhere. Thatcher saw easy solutions where others saw a number of long-term consequences of their policies.

A year later, on 30 November 1994, Thatcher also gave a TV interview on BBC. This time she was interviewed by John Simpson. Simpson referred to her conversation with the American Senator Robert Dole, where she had discussed with him the issue of ‘safe havens’ for people in the region of Bihac. Thatcher had been very critical about NATO and the organization’s loss of credibility in relation to Bosnia.³³² Again she repeated her disagreement with Douglas Hurd and the foreign office on the Bosnia issue. She rounded it off by claiming that she had tackled aggressive conflicts better (than Hurd) when she was in charge.³³³ Thatcher’s confrontations with Hurd started shortly after her resignation, disregarding the differences they might have had while she was still prime minister. Hurd comments on Thatcher in his book *Memoirs*:

Throughout the four years of war in Croatia and Bosnia Margaret Thatcher impressed on me in letters, telephone calls and meetings her strong conviction that the question was a simple one of aggression by one country, Serbia, against the others; we should deal with Milosevic the aggressor as she had dealt with the Argentines and as all of us had dealt with Saddam Hussein.³³⁴

On 27 June 1991, when Slovenia and Croatia declared their independence, Thatcher tried to tell Hurd what to do, as if she was still in charge.³³⁵ Thatcher apparently quite fervently advocated that the Americans should act; Hurd described her frequent interference like this: “... for the American administration, which was under constant pressure from senator Bob Dole, Margaret Thatcher and other partisans of ‘lift’.”³³⁶ Thatcher was characterized as one of ‘Bosnia’s warmest partisans’ by Hurd.³³⁷ One of the reasons for involving herself so whole-

³³² Margaret Thatcher Foundation, TV Interview for BBC (Bosnia) on 30.11.94, see <http://www.margareththatcher.org/speeches/displaydocument.asp?docid=110580> Accessed 01.07.2008.

³³³ Ibid.

³³⁴ Douglas Hurd, *Memoirs* (London: Abacus, 2004, first published in 2003 by Little, Brown), p. 491.

³³⁵ Ibid.

³³⁶ Ibid., p. 521.

³³⁷ Ibid.

heartedly for Bosnia, could be that she wanted to avoid a communist government in the newly independent states in Eastern Europe.

The British government had frequent conversations with state leaders in the other European countries, as well as in NATO and world-wide organizations like the United Nations. Finally the Americans engaged themselves more whole-heartedly and brokered the Vance-Owen Peace Plan in 1995. This was hardly a consequence of Thatcher's efforts to establish peace in the region. It is conceivable that she contributed to put Bosnia on the agenda in the media very early on, or that she raised the issue in newspaper articles and interviews when the atrocities were reported in a variety of news channels. Since her view of the conflict was somewhat simplified, her calls for military involvement might not have benefited the Major government.

Thatcher's high regard for Tony Blair was also commented upon shortly before the 1997 general election by Paul Johnson in the *Sunday Telegraph* on 16 March 1997. "Tony is the 'good son' Margaret never had", he stated in the headline. Johnson argued that Tony Blair had quite a lot in common with Thatcher in terms of ideology and personality. Thatcher had previously assured the electorate 'we have no reason to fear a Blair Government'.³³⁸ The reasons for this trust in Blair were many, but above all he was 'a British patriot', and he would be able to tackle the European federalists, according to Thatcher in Johnson's article. Her unrestrained admiration for Blair presumably contributed to John Major's chagrin before the general election, even though this article was written by somebody else.

Thatcher's TV appearances and the newspaper reports about her gave her an excellent opportunity to set the agenda for debate. Often this opportunity was used to diminish John Major's authority when she criticized what the government did or should have done.

4.6: Conclusion

Thatcher always said that she was a 'conviction politician'. It is possible that she through her speeches and articles just emphasized her engagement in the different issues, instead of thinking about what was best for the Conservative Party or what was best for the new prime minister. An important quality of her speeches and articles were that they displayed how disunited the party had become and how serious the divisions were. In addition, her deprecatory view of John Major ruined his chances to unite the party. He did not have the authoritative streak of Margaret Thatcher, which could have enabled him to strike back more

³³⁸ Paul Johnson, "Tony is the 'good son' Margaret never had", *The Sunday Telegraph*, 16.03.1997, p. 2. British Library, Newspaper Collections, Colindale, London.

forcefully; Major's cautious approach to leadership was in fact seen as one of the reasons he was chosen as her successor in 1990. Thatcher tried to make an impact on Bosnia and foreign policy, but her contribution in the Hong Kong controversy before the handover of the past colony to China in 1997 made a lasting positive impact. When it comes to other issues, Thatcher's insistence to voice her concerns and her opposition to the present policies was presumably very harmful to the Conservative Party in the 1990s.

Thatcher contributed to a fervent discussion about former and present politicians and her own legacy. The media gave her a lot of attention when her books were launched, and the promotion of her books was generously helped when the controversy was spelled out on the front pages of several newspapers. In numerous interviews Thatcher could broaden her attacks on the present government and its policies. John Major's leadership was one of the issues that was criticized, as was his attitude towards the EU and the Maastricht Treaty. Furthermore, Thatcher wanted to influence the direction of the Conservative Party, claiming they had not been conservative enough. This claim would probably be denied by many party members, who felt that the party already had moved to the right in their political agenda.

Some of the themes in Thatcher's books can be said to promote British nationalism and the importance of the British sovereignty as well as a British currency. Thatcher maintained that the relationship with the US was of prior importance, and that the Atlantic co-operation should be preferred to further integration of the EU countries. Thatcher fought relentlessly for her legacy through her books, and she remained as convicted as she had ever been that her point of view was the superior one. She did not regret much; she declared that some things had not turned out as she had expected. Her examples here were the Single European Act, which she signed in 1985, and her perception of John Major, that she encouraged as her successor in 1990. It is difficult to know what would have happened if *The Path to Power* had not been published in 1995, but all the speculation about a leadership contest was emphasized and enhanced with the book. Even though Major won with a clear majority, it did not restore his authority as a party leader.

Thatcher's views found a lot of support with the Conservative newspapers; that is to say their proprietors and editors in general, even though there was the occasional journalist who supported John Major and actually questioned Thatcher's legacy. Her influence in the public debate was enhanced because her views coincided with the right-wing press, or maybe the increasingly Eurosceptic press supported her views that she expressed in her books. In interviews and on book promotion tours she happily supplied journalists with eye-catching headlines because of her controversial views.

Chapter 5:

The indirect influence via Eurosceptic, Thatcherite groups and Eurosceptic newspapers

5.1: Think-tanks and Thatcherite Eurosceptic organizations

This chapter is mainly about indirect influence. Some right-wing Thatcherite or Eurosceptic groups shared Margaret Thatcher's views on policies in general or on the issue of further European integration. As will be discussed later, some of the groups were explicitly guided by what they perceived to be Thatcher's ideas on certain issues; for instance the Bruges Group, the Conservative Way Forward and the No Turning Back group. Other groups were more or less discreetly supported by Thatcher, as could be the case of the 92 Group and the Fresh Start parliamentary group. Before the 1997 general election Thatcher donated money and supported the European Foundation and the Referendum Party. Some voters would probably find it remarkable that a former Conservative premier voiced direct support for a party that posed a threat to the Conservative Party in the coming election.

Thatcherite groups influenced the House of Commons to a considerable degree in the rebellious period from the 1992 general election until Labour won the next general election in 1997. The groups mentioned above claimed their resistance against the Maastricht Treaty and a single currency and typically supported the demand for a national referendum over the same issues. These issues seemed also to preoccupy Thatcher a lot of the time – they were repeated frequently in speeches, debates, and in her books. Seen in isolation, each group might not seem influential. Some were only parliamentary groups, others were established outside Parliament, and a third variety included people both from Parliament and outside Parliament. However, many prominent Conservative politicians were members of several of these organizations at the same time. Thus, when seen in conjunction they constituted quite a powerful network of people who probably all had direct or indirect access to the politicians in the House of Commons. Members of these organizations could be important lobbyists to the various select committees that were responsible for research and policy-making and indirectly their influence could be substantial. Anthony Forster says that ‘... there was growing if tentative convergence among Conservative sceptics after 1988.’³³⁹ It is conceivable that this caused many of the sceptics to organize in target-oriented groups, even if they had different

³³⁹ Anthony Forster, *Euroscepticism in Contemporary British Politics* (London and New York: Routledge, 2002), p. 68.

reasons for their scepticism. Figure 1 on page 105 lists the presumably most prominent members of several right-wing groups or think-tanks. It is supposed to illustrate the considerable overlap in membership of different Thatcherite or Eurosceptic groups that existed in the 1990s. A few groups that are neither Thatcherite nor Eurosceptic are added to the list as well. Figure 2 on page 106 lists the different groups with the honorary offices that were given to many of the same politicians. These two figures are by no means complete; only a few selected prominent Conservative politicians are included.

Political journalists would also meet politicians and lobbyists in the House of Commons on a regular basis, and they also constituted a network. The last part of the chapter discusses the role of political journalists in the British press after Thatcher resigned, especially those who worked in the right-wing or conservative newspapers.

5.2: The Bruges Group

In her Bruges speech in September 1988 Thatcher voiced her opposition to the implications of further European integration. Her backdrop was the new-found dynamic within the EU³⁴⁰, generated by the ratification of the Single European Act (SEA) in the mid-1980s.³⁴¹ Thatcher may have come to the conclusion that other EU countries planned to exploit the agenda of market integration to promote integration of related policy areas. The Bruges Speech led to the creation of the Bruges Group, a London-based think-tank established in February 1989. It set out ‘... to promote the idea of a less centralised European structure than that emerging in Brussels.’³⁴² It does not necessarily promote ideas or policies in support of any party, but in its mission statement it says that it ‘... aims to promote discussion on the European Union and to advance the education of the public on European affairs.’ Furthermore it states that the group will be ‘... equipping politicians, key opinion-formers and the media with the information needed for a complete restructuring of Britain’s relationship with other European countries.’³⁴³

The Bruges Group also had a ‘Friends of Bruges Group’ in the House of Commons. More than 100 MPs belonged to this group at the end of the 1980s, and it has been said that it

³⁴⁰ For practical reasons the name of the European Community (EC) is referred to as the European Union (EU), since the organization changed its name in November 1993. Its membership has been enlarged and the level of integration has increased, but in principle it is the same organization before and after November 1993.

³⁴¹ The Single European Act was signed by the EC members in 1985 in Luxembourg. Britain ratified it in 1986.

³⁴² Bruges Group, about the Bruges Group: <http://www.brugesgroup.com/about/index.live>. Accessed 26.10.2008

³⁴³ Ibid.

is like a party within a party.³⁴⁴ Assumedly the ‘Friends of Bruges Group’ was actively campaigning to have their MPs elected in important committees, for instance on foreign affairs or Europe.

Through the Bruges Group (and the ‘Friends of Bruges’) Thatcher found a lot of support for her declared scepticism of the integration that the EU planned to develop further. The group constituted a sounding-board for Thatcherite Conservatives, especially after her resignation as prime minister. They have kept the European issue at the forefront of discussions both outside and in the House of Commons.

Bill Cash was chairman for the Friends of Bruges Group as well as an outspoken founder and leader of several groups or think-tanks that have been established to propagate opposition to the European Union and further integration. Cash has been a prominent Eurosceptic and a Conservative MP for many years. It is worth noting that he had the reputation of being more rebellious in his voting behaviour and in his eagerness to propose amendments to the European Communities (Amendment) Bill.³⁴⁵ He alone proposed 240 amendments to this bill and in 47 instances he voted against the government on so-called three-line whips – these were regarded as the most important to the parliamentary party in order to secure majority in the House of Commons on a proposition.³⁴⁶ He founded the European Foundation in 1993 and is currently involved in the European Reform Forum.³⁴⁷ Cash is still actively involved as a speaker at meetings arranged by the Bruges Group – in 2008 he campaigned against the Lisbon Treaty.³⁴⁸

Even though the Bruges Group claims to be independent of any political party, the majority of politicians who are listed as speakers on their meetings are Conservative present or former MPs who are known to be Eurosceptical. These include for instance Michael Howard, Iain Duncan Smith, Michael Portillo, John Redwood, Nigel Farage and Norman Tebbit. Several MPs have written Bruges Group publications –Tebbit and Lamont have been very active contributors.³⁴⁹

³⁴⁴ Forster, *Euroscepticism*, p. 71.

³⁴⁵ Popularly called the Maastricht Bill.

³⁴⁶ Hugo Young, *This Blessed Plot: Britain and Europe from Churchill to Blair* (New York: The Overlook Press, Peter Mayer Publishers, Inc.), p. 395.

³⁴⁷ Wikipedia, s.v. ‘Bill Cash’, see: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bill_Cash. Accessed 12.03.2009

³⁴⁸ Bruges Group, about Bill Cash, see: <http://www.brugesgroup.com/events/?article=14012>. Accessed 22.03.2009. The Lisbon Treaty was signed in December by the EU members, but it still has not been ratified.

³⁴⁹ Bruges Group, about Norman Tebbit and Norman Lamont as contributors to publications: <http://www.brugesgroup.com/mediacentre/index.live>. Accessed 22.03.2009. People who have accepted peerages are mentioned without titles throughout the dissertation.

It is worth noticing that the vice-president of the think-tank is Norman Lamont, who was chancellor when Britain was forced out of the ERM in September 1992.³⁵⁰ Apparently he became much more of a Eurosceptic after this debacle. In a cabinet re-shuffle in 1993 he was replaced as chancellor with the more Eurofriendly Kenneth Clarke, and as a backbencher Lamont was a fierce critic of the Major government in general, and the European policies in particular. He argued that Britain ought to leave the European Union in his book *Sovereign Britain*, which was published in 1995.³⁵¹

After the general election in 1997, the Bruges Group published a paper entitled “John Major and Europe: The Failure of a Policy 1990-1997”. Dr. Martin Holmes stated that Major became increasingly Eurosceptical in his premiership as well as the Conservative Party.³⁵² However, Major was throughout the period criticized by several Thatcherite MPs, among them Michael Portillo, Peter Lilley and John Redwood, undeterred by the fact that they were cabinet members. Major talked about three ‘bastards’ in an off-the-record remark after a TV-interview on 25 July 1993.³⁵³ Even though Major did not mention any names, journalists seemed to agree about who the ‘bastards’ were. The remark created havoc in the media. The effect was no appeasement of the Eurosceptics.³⁵⁴

A fringe meeting entitled ‘The Conservative Party, Where Next?’ was advertised at the Bruges Group homepage in October 2005.³⁵⁵ One of the speakers was John Redwood, who has been very busy writing pamphlets for several right-wing groups including the Bruges Group. He has authored several books, among them *Just Say No: 100 Arguments Against the Euro*.³⁵⁶ He worked for Margaret Thatcher in her Policy Unit in the first half of the 1980s and he was known to be a dedicated Thatcher supporter. Redwood resigned Major’s cabinet in order to stand in the leadership contest in 1995. He has later participated in shadow cabinets 1997-2000.

The Bruges Group is still active today; arranging meetings, publishing papers advocating their Eurosceptic views. The present chairman Robert Oulds sums up 10 key successes for the group since 1989 in his paper “All you need to know about the EU”, which

³⁵⁰ For reasons of simplicity are formal titles and functions not spelled with capital letters, except titles of foreign nationals.

³⁵¹ Wikipedia, s.v. ‘Norman Lamont’ - http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Norman_Lamont. Accessed 12.03.2009

³⁵² Dr. Martin Holmes is Lecturer in politics at St. Hugh’s College in Oxford and a former co-chairman of the Bruges Group 1993-2001.

³⁵³ Peter Dorey, ed., *The Major Premiership: Politics and Policies under John Major, 1990-97* (Great Britain: Macmillan Press Ltd., 1999), p. 251.

³⁵⁴ John Major, *John Major: The Autobiography* (London: HarperCollinsPublishers, 1999), p. 343.

³⁵⁵ Bruges Group, about a fringe meeting in October 2005: <http://www.brugesgroup.com/news.live?article=9145&keyword=15>. Accessed 22.03.2009.

³⁵⁶ Wikipedia, s.v. ‘John Redwood’: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Redwood. Accessed 12.03.2009.

was probably published in 2005.³⁵⁷ According to Oulds, the Bruges Group has played a significant role, as it has:

Bolstered anti-EU feeling amongst the nation. Instigated the election of more EU-sceptic politicians. Assisted successful anti-EU campaigns in Denmark, Ireland, Sweden and the French and Dutch EU Constitution referenda. Gained a great deal of media coverage and won many debates with Europhiles on the radio and on television.³⁵⁸

This list of achievements illustrates how the group works in trying to influence both politicians and the public. Still held in high esteem, Margaret Thatcher's portrait is displayed on the front page together with a map of Europe. Thatcher's significance is still visible today, also because she is honorary president of the group. On 26 October, 2008 the 20th anniversary of her Bruges Speech was celebrated by the Bruges Group. Norman Tebbit and the president of the Czech Republic, Vaclav Klaus, were the main speakers at the event. Margaret Thatcher, aged 83, attended the dinner. In his speech Norman Tebbit advocated a referendum on the EU, claiming that it might be necessary to withdraw from it and said as well: 'We need to show Thatcherite courage and determination to lead the country along that path.'³⁵⁹

Among several prominent politicians mentioned as guest speakers and contributors of many Bruges Group papers are Bill Cash, Norman Lamont, Norman Tebbit and John Redwood. They all criticized John Major and his government and all of them, maybe except Norman Lamont, were described as 'Thatcherites'. The Bruges Group seems to have been quite influential when it came to advocating resistance to further integration of the EU countries.

5.3: Fresh Start

At least 27 organizations were established both within and outside the House of Commons that were dedicated to fight the Maastricht Treaty after the Maastricht European Council in 1991.³⁶⁰ Members of these groups did not want Britain to ratify the treaty, so they did

³⁵⁷ Bruges Group, Robert Oulds paper "All you need to know about the EU", see: <http://www.brugesgroup.com/mediacentre/index.live?article=10770>. Accessed 22.03.2009. It is very hard to establish the date of publication; Robert Oulds was unable to verify this in correspondence with the writer of this dissertation.

³⁵⁸ Ibid.

³⁵⁹ Bruges Group, event with Margaret Thatcher and Norman Tebbit present, see: <http://www.brugesgroup.com/mediacentre/releases.live?article=14035>. Accessed 26.10.2008

³⁶⁰ Forster, *Euroscepticism*, p. 88.

everything they could in order to avoid this. One of the ardent Maastricht Treaty opponents was Margaret Thatcher. She left the House of Commons just after the Fresh Start group was established, but she played a vital role in her support for the group as a Baroness in the House of Lords.

Michael Spicer promoted two Early Day Motions (EDMs) during the Maastricht Treaty debates in the House of Commons. The EDMs can signify disagreement with government policies, for instance, and even though they do not have any formal significance they are important because they can be said to tell the general feeling among MPs on a certain issue. If an EDM gets popular support among the backbenchers, it predicts how the eventual debate on the issue will turn out. Ministers, whips and parliamentary private secretaries are not allowed to sign it, however.

The first EDM from Spicer called for a 'fresh start' for the EC on 3 June 1992. This motion gave name to the substantial group of MPs that felt very negative about the advancement of European integration and the aims for the European Union. This motion was signed by more than 100 Conservative backbenchers.³⁶¹ This number constituted nearly a third of all Conservative MPs at the time, and a majority of the backbenchers.³⁶² The 'Whipless Nine' were all members of the 'Fresh Start' group.³⁶³

Other members included George Gardiner, Bill Cash, and Iain Duncan-Smith. Some of them had been negative towards the EU for a long time, while others had become more hesitant about the planned development in the early 1990s. Teresa Gorman says that Fresh Start members were not all necessarily Thatcher supporters, but they all shared Thatcher's declared scepticism about the ratification of the Maastricht Treaty.³⁶⁴ The Fresh Start group had around 26 ardent supporters in the early 1990s, and then the number increased to over 50 in the mid-1990s.³⁶⁵ According to Gorman, this group deliberately sought to sabotage the Maastricht Treaty.³⁶⁶

Spicer's second EDM called for a 'fresh start' on economic policy on 24 September 1992. Britain had been forced out of the ERM on 16 September, which was labelled 'Black

³⁶¹ The number varies a little in different sources. See Dorey, *The Major Premiership*, p. 251; Forster, *Euro scepticism*, p. 87; Andrew Baker and Steve Ludlam, "Whips or Scorpions? The Maastricht Vote and the Conservative Party" in *Parliamentary Affairs*, 46:2, p.166 and Teresa Gorman, and Heather Kirby, *The Bastards: Dirty Tricks and The Challenge to Europe* (London: Pan Books, 1993), p. 53.

³⁶² Gorman and Kirby, *The Bastards*, pp. xi, 53.

³⁶³ These lost the whip in November 1994: Teddy Taylor, Nicholas Budgen, Christopher Gill, Michael Cartiss, John Wilkinson, Richard Shepherd, Teresa Gorman, and Tony Marlow. Richard Body resigned the whip himself.

³⁶⁴ Gorman and Kirby, *The Bastards*, p. 35.

³⁶⁵ Forster, *Euro scepticism*, p. 87.

³⁶⁶ Gorman, and Kirby, *The Bastards*, p. 57.

Wednesday' by politicians who thought Britain ought to be a member of the ERM and 'White Wednesday' by the antagonists. This new EDM was signed by more than 60 MPs.³⁶⁷

Members of the Fresh Start group were against the ratification of the Maastricht Treaty as well as the single currency. They wanted a referendum on both these issues. Since 1991 Norman Tebbit and Margaret Thatcher had argued for the case of a referendum on the Maastricht Treaty. In Denmark the treaty was voted down on 2 June 1992, which was applauded by Thatcher.³⁶⁸ The group was organized almost as a party within the Conservative Party, with Michael Spicer as their leader. They openly rebelled against their own party by voting against proposals by the government 985 times and abstained 1,515 times in votes concerning the Maastricht Bill. Occasionally they voted with the Labour Party instead.³⁶⁹ The prominent Conservative MP Norman Tebbit became a member of the House of Lords after the general election in 1992 together with Margaret Thatcher, among others. They both supported the 'Fresh Start' alliance after they left the House of Commons.³⁷⁰ The Conservative MP Woodrow Wyatt wrote in his diary in August 1992 that Tebbit had teamed up with Thatcher and 'stirs her up'.³⁷¹ This was a comment relating to the Maastricht Treaty debate.

Denmark arranged its second referendum on the Maastricht Treaty on 18 May 1993, since the result of the first referendum in June 1992 was 'no' to the actual treaty. This time the result was 'yes', which was a blow to the British Eurosceptic politicians. Two campaigns were carried out regarding a referendum in Britain. One campaign which was organized and launched by Bill Cash and James Goldsmith was a petition that collected signatures for a referendum. The other campaign was organized by Margaret Thatcher, David Alton and Bryan Gould in which people were asked to declare yes or no to a referendum in a telephone poll. Neither campaign was a huge success.³⁷² Thatcher's contribution apparently did not make a big impact in this connection.

The slight majority for the Conservative MPs made it increasingly difficult to win in divisions for the government, especially with so many rebel politicians openly defying the whip. The government was defeated on three occasions, and John Major had to announce a vote of confidence twice in order to make the rebels comply with the government's proposals.

³⁶⁷ Ibid.

³⁶⁸ David Gowland & Arthus Turner, *Reluctant Europeans: Britain and European Integration 1945-96* (United Kingdom: Pearson Education Limited, 1999), pp. 280-281.

³⁶⁹ Forster, *Euroscepticism*, p. 87.

³⁷⁰ Shaun Bowler, David M. Farrell and Richard S. Katz (eds.), *Party Discipline and parliamentary Government* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1999), p. 76.

³⁷¹ Wikipedia, s. v. Norman Tebbit, see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Norman_Tebbit. Accessed 12.03.2009.

³⁷² Gorman and Kirby, *The Bastards*, p. 165.

The Conservative Party was deeply divided over the European Union in the 1990s. Under John Major the Conservative majority was small as a result of the general election in April 1992, and the number was decreasing due to a series of defections and by-election losses. In this situation it did not take a large number of people to influence power over the party and its policies. Francoise Boucek says in her paper: “When a faction becomes decisive in bringing about some outcome, the bargaining power of its members is strengthened particularly if their votes become critical to a party’s survival in government. This was the case for a minority faction of Conservative ‘Euro-Rebels’ under John Major.”³⁷³ Gowland and Turner describe how the number Eurosceptic Conservative politicians grew and how support for their activities was reflected in a number of pressure groups. They argue:

What they lacked in numbers, however, they more than made up for in obsessiveness, energy and flair for publicity. Their views on Europe had a strong following among Conservative activists in the constituencies, and they also attracted growing support from within the parliamentary party.³⁷⁴

Even though an MP is associated with a group, either within or outside Parliament, it is important to underline that this does not mean that the MP supports all the ideas of the group. The different groups and organizations also differ in that some groups only advocate for or against one issue, while others actually have a whole range of issues that they want to support or propagate.³⁷⁵ ‘Fresh Start’ is an example of a single-issue group (against further European integration as proposed in the Maastricht Treaty), but even so, some of the group members sometimes voted with the group (against the government in most cases), other times they voted against the declared wishes of the group’s leader – or they abstained from voting.

5.4: No Turning Back

Within the House of Commons there was a fairly large group of politicians sympathetic to Margaret Thatcher and her policies at the time of her resignation in 1990. One group was called ‘No Turning Back’ (NTB) and it constituted MPs who actively supported Thatcher’s radical ideas. They agreed with Thatcher that privatization of the public sector was necessary.

³⁷³ Francoise Boucek, “Managing factional conflict under severe constraints: John Major and British Conservatives 1992-1997”, paper presented at the ‘Rational Choice and British Politics’ panel session 4, Political Studies Association Annual Conference, Leicester, England on April 16, 2003. See <http://www.psa.ac.uk/journals/pdf/5/2003/Francoise%20Boucek.Pdf>. Accessed 26.06.2008

³⁷⁴ Gowland and Turner, *Reluctant Europeans*, p. 294.

³⁷⁵ Bowler, Farrell, and Katz, *Party Discipline*, pp. 83-85.

The name of the group refers to what Thatcher said at the Conservative Party Conference in 1980: 'You turn if you want to. The lady's not for turning.'³⁷⁶ Her predecessor, Edward Heath was accused of making U-turns due to his repeated revision of economic policy in the face of popular and trade-union pressure.

Most of the politicians that belonged to the NTB shared Thatcher's views on European integration and the Maastricht Treaty. Among the professed Eurosceptics were Peter Lilley, Michael Portillo, John Redwood, Iain Duncan Smith, David Davis, Liam Fox and Eric Forth.³⁷⁷ The No Turning Back group met regularly for dinner every four weeks and published pamphlets, helped by Ralph Harris, who also was a devoted Eurosceptic.³⁷⁸ The NTB members played a considerable role in supporting the Eurosceptics outside Parliament – not necessarily lining up in support with the more militant Fresh Start-members in the House of Commons. Teresa Gorman claims that NTB influenced the Major government to a large degree.³⁷⁹

A considerable proportion of the NTB group were 'hard-liners', willing to challenge the government and the prime minister. They adopted the hardline approach of their heroine, Margaret Thatcher, willing to fight in order to have influence in the House of Commons. John Redwood challenged John Major in the leadership challenge in 1995 and 1997; Iain Duncan Smith was elected leader of the Conservative Party after Hague resigned in 2001 and David Davis participated in the leadership challenge in 2005. They all were members of the NTB group and can be seen as the most ambitious of Major's colleagues in the House of Commons.

5.5: Conservative Way Forward

Yet another right-wing group was established shortly after Margaret Thatcher resigned, which stated adherence to her ideas about how society best should be organized for the benefit of the individual. Conservative Way Forward (CWF) was established in 1991, 'to defend and build upon the achievements of the Conservative Party under Margaret Thatcher's leadership, and to adapt the principles of her era in government to modern concerns and challenges.'³⁸⁰

³⁷⁶ Wikipedia, 'No Turning Back', see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/No_Turning_Back. Accessed 26.10.2008

³⁷⁷ Young, *This Blessed Plot*, pp. 412-472.

³⁷⁸ BBC News: "Free-marketeer Lord Harris dies", see: http://newsvote.bbc.co.uk/mapps/pagetools/print/news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/politics/6067362.stm. Published 20.10.2006. Accessed 19.03.2009. Ralph Harris later was known as Lord Harris of High Cross.

³⁷⁹ Gorman, and Kirby, *The Bastards*, p. 13.

³⁸⁰ Conservative Way Forward, homepage, see: <http://www.conwayfor.org/about-us.aspx> Accessed 26.10.2008.

Politicians that support several organisations share their thoughts and probably influence each other. Powerful ideas are reinforced and might create an agenda outside the organisations as well. CWF does not have a parliamentary equivalent, but there are four Eurosceptical Conservative MPs in its council at the time of writing, including Iain Duncan-Smith.³⁸¹ Margaret Thatcher is honorary president and the honorary vice-presidents are David Davis, Liam Fox, William Hague, Cecil Parkinson and Norman Tebbit.³⁸²

Margaret Thatcher is still regarded as a significant force for the Conservative parliamentary party, according to an article in the *Forward!* magazine published by the CWF published in the spring of 2007.³⁸³ The CWF arranged a 25th Falklands War Anniversary Dinner on 7 June 2007 with Thatcher present.³⁸⁴ Britain's victory in the Falkland War in 1982 strengthened Thatcher's standing in the Conservative Party as well as on a national level. It has been said to have ensured the majority for the Conservatives in the 1983 general election. The chairman of the group today, Christopher Chope, says about her: 'During her years in Downing Street, Margaret Thatcher did so much to turn her vision of individual ownership and freedom of choice into reality, and the torch she lit is now carried forward by us.'³⁸⁵

In an article published in the magazine *Forward!* William Hague argued against further European political integration and for transatlantic trade without trade barriers. He also spoke about the need for a flexible labour market, with as few regulations as possible. He referred to the Social Chapter of the Maastricht Treaty, which gave John Major enormous problems to have ratified as an amendment to the treaty in Parliament more than a decade ago.³⁸⁶ Daniel Hamilton, editor of *Forward!*, echoed Thatcher in his editorial about the EU, when he talked about 'layers of senseless bureaucracy' as a characteristic of the EU, and he paid a tribute to Thatcher by saying: 'We need to be the Party of radical ideas and reform – the same kind of Party the British people elected in 1979.'³⁸⁷ Thatcher was labelled a radical

³⁸¹ Wikipedia, s. v. 'Conservative Way Forward', see: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Conservative_Way_Forward Accessed 26.03.2008.

³⁸² Cecil Parkinson is now Lord Parkinson of Carnforth and Norman Tebbit is now Lord Tebbit of Chingford.

³⁸³ Jonathan Isaby, "In Conversation with John Whittingdale OBE MP" in *Forward!* spring forum 2007, p.18: <http://www.conwayfor.org/Files/MediaFiles/sf07.pdf>. Accessed 26.03.2009.

³⁸⁴ Conservative Way Forward, Margaret Thatcher attendance at 25th Falklands War Anniversary Dinner in *Forward!* summer 2007, p.6, see: <http://www.conwayfor.org/Files/MediaFiles/summer07.pdf>. Accessed 26.03.2009

³⁸⁵ Conservative Way Forward, Christopher Chope about Margaret Thatcher, see: <http://www.conwayfor.org/about-us/what-we-do.aspx> Accessed 26.10.2008

³⁸⁶ William Hague, "Time for new priorities for Europe", in *Forward!*, published autumn 2006, pp. 10-11; see: <http://cwf.st2.moodia.com/Files/MediaFiles/conf06.pdf>. Accessed 26.03.2009

³⁸⁷ Daniel Hamilton, editorial in *Forward!*, summer 2007, p. 3, see: <http://www.conwayfor.org/Files/MediaFiles/summer07.pdf>. Accessed 26.03.2009.

Conservative, because her policies led to big transformations of British society during the 1980s.

5.6: The 92 Group

The parliamentary 92 Group was established as early as 1979 by Sir Patrick Wall. The group is described as Thatcherite and right-wing in different sources, even though it is hard to find proof of any direct link to Margaret Thatcher.³⁸⁸ Members of the group shared the same view on a range of issues: Scepticism about the European Union, concern about rising crime levels, the importance of family values and the restoration of authority in schools.³⁸⁹ The members were backbenchers and the group was very effective in promoting and electing candidates for different leading positions in committees in the House of Commons.

The chairman of the 92 Group in the years 1984-1996 was the Eurosceptic George Gardiner. He was a staunch Thatcher supporter, although he never served in her government. John Barnes in the *Independent* writes about him in his obituary 'Certainly he thrived on rebellion and was very good at organising it.'³⁹⁰ Gardiner was involved in other Conservative groups in addition to the 92 Group, as the Conservative Monday Club, Fresh Start, and Conservative Group for Europe. He was deselected from his constituency in 1996, and he was a candidate for the Referendum Party in 1997, but failed to be elected.

The 92 Group constituted around ninety MPs in the early 1990s, and had thus a fairly big influence on the composition of the different committees if they agreed on how to vote.³⁹¹ The chairman of the Conservative Party (1992-1994) Norman Fowler acknowledged in an interview that the 92 Group was quite powerful, and that the 92 Group often shared the views of the No Turning Back group. He further stated '... they want this radical approach and that's why the Government's kind of run up against the buffers.'³⁹²

³⁸⁸ Colin Brown, "The Government in Crisis: Thatcherites return to stalk the lobbies: Colin Brown reports on the 92 Group of backbenchers who are threatening to become 'the tail that wags the dog' in the *Independent* on 28.10.1992, see <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/the-government-in-crisis-thatcherites-return-> Accessed 27.03.2009; BBC NEWS: "Rifkind depart Tory leader race", published 11.10.2005, see: http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/2/hi/uk_news/politics/4330728.stm Accessed 19.03.2009

³⁸⁹ Norman Fowler, *A Political Suicide: The Conservatives' voyage into the wilderness*, (London: Politico's Publishing, 2008), p.78.

³⁹⁰ John Barnes, "Obituary: Sir George Gardiner", 19.11. 2002 in the *Independent*; see http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_qn4158/is:20021119/ai_n12665565 Accessed 27.03.2009

³⁹¹ Gorman and Kirby, *The Bastards*, p. 30.

³⁹² BBC Online – On The Record – Interviews: "Sir Norman Fowler in an interview with John Humphrys on 6 November 1994": see <http://www.bbc.co.uk/otr/intext94-95/Fowler6.11.94.html> Accessed 19.03.2009

Anthony Forster claims that there has been considerable overlap of the No Turning Back group and the Bruges Group.³⁹³ Several members of the 92 Group were simultaneously members of the NTB group (Gerald Howarth, David Maclean and Edward Leigh); George Gardiner was also a member of Fresh Start, whereas Christopher Chope and Norman Tebbit were prominent members of Conservative Way Forward.³⁹⁴

The 92 Group has been regarded as an only moderately influential group among the Eurosceptical groups, even though it had a lot of members in the middle of the 1990s. The advantage of voting together in a 'block vote' was demonstrated for instance in the leadership election in 1995. Gardiner's 92 Group pooled behind the candidacy of John Redwood and showed the strength of the opposition to John Major.³⁹⁵ The 92 Group shared many of Thatcher's views on several issues, including her scepticism to the European Union.

5.7: The European Foundation and the Referendum Party

The Great College Street Group started out at the time of the Maastricht Treaty debates in Parliament, in October 1992. This transformed into the think-tank called the European Foundation, which was established by Bill Cash, the devout Eurosceptic who also played an influential role in several other right-wing organizations, as previously mentioned. The group advocated a careful review of the different EU treaties that Britain has ratified; namely the Maastricht, Amsterdam and the Nice Treaty.³⁹⁶

James Goldsmith contributed money to the European Foundation. At the same time he also had founded the Referendum Party, which intended to fight for seats in the 1997 general election. This was seen as rather embarrassing, because the Referendum Party would then compete for the same seats as Conservative Party candidates. Therefore, the Conservative Party protested the funding from Goldsmith. Margaret Thatcher took over as patron to the European Foundation, while she secretly also supported James Goldsmith and his Referendum Party. The support was channelled through one of the Referendum Party's candidates, George Gardiner.³⁹⁷ Gardiner had been deselected by his Reigate Conservative constituency before the general election, which quite seldom has occurred in the party.

³⁹³ Forster, *Euroscepticism*, p. 89.

³⁹⁴ Wikipedia, s. v. '92 Group', see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/92_Group Accessed 14.01.2009.

³⁹⁵ See previous chapters for more details.

³⁹⁶ Wikipedia, s.v. 'European Foundation', see [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/European_Foundation_\(think_tank\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/European_Foundation_(think_tank)) Accessed 04.02.2009.

³⁹⁷ John Campbell, *Margaret Thatcher: Volume Two: The Iron Lady*, (London: Vintage, 2008), p. 785.

The Referendum Party wanted a referendum in Britain about what kind of future the electorate envisioned for the EU. The party emphasized the importance of sovereignty for each EU member and that a federal Europe was clearly not the desired option.³⁹⁸ The Referendum Party did not manage to get any seats in the general election 1997. It received 811,829 votes nationally, which constitutes about three per cent of all votes cast.³⁹⁹ There is some disagreement regarding what impact the party did have in the election, for instance whether the party contributed to any loss of seats for the Conservative Party. The estimate is that only about 3 Conservative constituencies would have secured a candidate from the Conservative Party, if the Referendum Party had not intervened.⁴⁰⁰ It is possible to argue that in the 24 constituencies where the Conservatives held marginal seats (with a very low majority) the Referendum Party votes led to victory for 19 Labour seats and five Liberal Democrats seats.⁴⁰¹ The Referendum Party transformed into the Referendum Movement, which in 1999 merged with the Euro Information Campaign and became the Democracy Movement.⁴⁰² As patron Thatcher played a role in the European Foundation, and could to some extent probably influence the think-tank. She secretly also supported the Referendum Party in her vigorous fight for a British referendum on the EU and a single currency.

³⁹⁸ Wikipedia, s. v. 'Referendum Party', see: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Referendum_Party Accessed 14.01.2009.

³⁹⁹ Pippa Norris and Neil T. Gavin, eds.: *Britain Votes 1997* (Great Britain: Oxford University Press, 1997), first published in *Parliamentary Affairs*, 1997), p. 18.

⁴⁰⁰ Ibid., pp.1,18.

⁴⁰¹ Ibid., p. 18.

⁴⁰² Wikipedia, s. v. 'Referendum Party', see: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Referendum_Party Accessed 14.01.2009.

Politician	NTB⁴⁰³	BG⁴⁰⁴	CWF	FS	92	EF	Other groups
Margaret Thatcher ⁴⁰⁵		X	X	(X)		X	
Michael Portillo	X	X					
John Redwood ⁴⁰⁶	X	X					Selsdon Group, Conservative 2000
Peter Lilley	X						Bow Group
Norman Lamont ⁴⁰⁷		X					Bow Group
Iain Duncan Smith ⁴⁰⁸	X	X	X	X		X	Social Justice Policy Group, Centre for Social Justice
Norman Tebbit ⁴⁰⁹		X	X	(X)	X		Selsdon Group
Michael Howard		X					Bow Group
Bill Cash				X		X	
James Goldsmith ⁴¹⁰						X	Referendum Party (later the Democracy Movement)
David Davis	X		X			X	
Nigel Farage		X					UK Independence Party
Robin Birley						X	Democracy Movement
George Gardiner				X	X		Conservative Group for Europe, Referendum Party
Liam Fox	X		X				
Michael Spicer				X			European Reform Group

Figure 1: Influential members of several right-wing groups/factions/think-tanks⁴¹¹

⁴⁰³ NTB: No Turning Back; BG: Bruges Group; CWF: Conservative Way Forward; FS: Fresh Start; 92: 92 Group; EF: European Foundation

⁴⁰⁴ Persons marked as members have been invited to speak or written pamphlets which have been published by the group and the politicians on the list are supposedly sympathetic to the general aim of the BG.

⁴⁰⁵ Thatcher: honorary president of the Bruges Group + Conservative Way Forward; honorary patron of the European Foundation; support for Fresh Start.

⁴⁰⁶ Redwood: honorary president of the Selsdon Group

⁴⁰⁷ Lamont: vice president of Bruges Group

⁴⁰⁸ Duncan Smith: chairman of the Social Justice Policy Group in 2005

⁴⁰⁹ Tebbit: honorary patron Selsdon Group + vice president of Conservative Way Forward. Support for Fresh Start.

⁴¹⁰ Goldsmith: honorary patron of the European Foundation

⁴¹¹ The sources are quoted elsewhere in this chapter. The survey is not complete. The purpose is to show the amount of overlap between the membership of different groups. The politicians were not members or supporters at exactly the same time; however in most cases this is true for some part of the 1990s.

Group or think-tank	Eurosceptic	Thatcherite	HP VHP P⁴¹²	Prominent MPs who are or have been members
Fresh Start	X			M. Spicer, G. Gardiner, I. Duncan Smith, B. Cash, The 'Whipless Nine',
No Turning Back ⁴¹³	X	X		J. Redwood, I. Duncan Smith (until Sep. '01), P. Lilley, M. Portillo, L. Fox, D. Davis
92 Group	X	X		N. Tebbit, G. Gardiner
Conservative Way Forward	X	X	M. Thatcher (HP), N. Tebbit (HVP)	L Fox, D. Davis, I. Duncan Smith, W. Hague
Bruges Group ⁴¹⁴	X	X	M. Thatcher (HP), N. Lamont (HVP)	M. Portillo, J. Redwood, M. Howard, I. Duncan Smith, N. Tebbit, N. Farage
European Foundation	X		M. Thatcher (P), J. Goldsmith (P)	B. Cash, J. Goldsmith, I. Duncan Smith, D. Davis, R. Birley
Referendum Party	X		A. Goldsmith (HP) ⁴¹⁵	J. Goldsmith, R. Birley, G. Gardiner
UK Independence Party	X			N. Farage
Conservative Group for Europe			M. Thatcher (P), J. Major (P), W. Hague (P)	G. Gardiner K. Clarke (was president at one time)
European Reform Group				J. Aitken, M. Spicer
Selsdon Group ⁴¹⁶			J. Redwood (HP), N. Tebbit (P)	
Bow Group				P. Lilley, N. Lamont, M. Howard G. Howe
Centre for Social Justice				I. Duncan Smith (chairman in 2005)
Social Justice Policy Group				I. Duncan Smith
Conservative 2000				John Redwood

Figure 2: Membership in a few Eurosceptic or Thatcherite organizations/think tanks established in the 1980s and 1990s. In addition are some older and some newer groups included because of their membership.

⁴¹² The list is by no means complete. Only a few selected politicians are included in the table of honorary functions. H: honorary president; VHP: honorary vice president; P: patron.

⁴¹³ Members of this group were called 'Thatcher's children'

⁴¹⁴ Membership of the Bruges Group has been difficult to establish. Politicians listed here have been speakers or contributors to pamphlets distributed by the Bruges Group.

⁴¹⁵ Annabel Goldsmith was married to James Goldsmith. She became president of the Democracy Movement.

⁴¹⁶ The Bow Group and the Selsdon Group were established in 1951 and 1973 respectively. They are included here because of their prominent members or politicians in honorary functions. The list is not complete.

5.8: British newspapers and their support for Thatcher and her Eurosceptic views

The Oxford Concise Dictionary of Politics gives the following definition of ‘mass media’: ‘The various agents of mass communication and entertainment: newspapers, magazines and other publications, television, radio, the cinema, and the Internet.’⁴¹⁷ One of the functions of mass media can be to entertain people. Since this dissertation is about political influence, the political functions of mass media are especially interesting. According to Ian Campbell in *the Oxford Concise Dictionary of Politics* this includes ‘... the collection, organization, and transmission of news and information, the formation of opinion, and, in more or less open societies, some contribution to public debate.’⁴¹⁸ There are many choices available to those who collect and organize the news and political debates. A democratic country will generally accept that all citizens have the freedom of speech and the freedom of print. An important function of mass media will then be to ensure that everybody’s voice can be heard or presented, in order to inform and to influence others. In a representative democracy it is vital that the inhabitants are given the possibility to learn about the different policy alternatives before they cast their votes in any local or national election. Equally important is the role of the media to function as a watch-dog on behalf of the citizens, to keep an eye on how the elected representatives govern the country. The media also function as a corrective if government fails to perform its duties as it should – in other words, how well the public institutions serve the public or how for instance schools, hospitals, universities and public offices meet the standards that have been set. Thus, to briefly sum up the non-entertaining functions of the mass media: they are agenda-setting, informing and criticising the public institutions and those who govern the country.

The agenda-setting function of for instance newspapers has been briefly discussed in a previous chapter. The press does not merely report the political debates that are taking place in Parliament or in local councils. Journalists can also initiate a public debate which can have political consequences. A contentious issue can be brought to attention, and then politicians can be forced to take a stand in the ongoing debate. More often than not newspapers present controversial cases where voters strongly disagree as well as public figures, for instance

⁴¹⁷ Ian Campbell, s.v. ‘mass media’ in Iain McLean and Alistair McMillan, eds., *Oxford Concise Dictionary of Politics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 3rd ed. 2009, first published 1996), p. 337.

⁴¹⁸ Ibid.

politicians. The latter presumably want to talk about issues that are important to their party, and they would very much like to initiate a debate.

During John Major's first government, from November 1990 to April 1992, Major experienced a largely favourable Conservative press. Although he was perceived to be nice, smiling, non-aggressive; a welcome change from his predecessor in terms of personality. He had been the chancellor and the foreign secretary in Thatcher's cabinet since July 1989, Major had been seen as self-effacing in his previous offices. After the 1992 general election, when he had secured a small majority in the House of Commons, the Conservative press seemed to appreciate his style and leadership less than before. Margaret Thatcher had already declared her lack of faith in him as a party leader, and when Britain experienced the fatal exit of the ERM in September 1992 the Eurosceptic Conservative press joined the critical voices of the governing party and its leader.⁴¹⁹ Dennis Kavanagh and Anthony Seldon say:

Many newspapers gave full rein to Conservative Eurosceptics or member of the Thatcher entourage who attacked Major for weakness or allegedly betraying her legacy. Attempts, pressed on him by aides, to court the proprietors and editors of these papers were rarely successful. He regarded the exercise as beneath his dignity, having little respect for most of them, and indulged it reluctantly and infrequently.⁴²⁰

Thatcher had become increasingly Eurosceptic during her last years as premier, and she aggressively attacked the views of John Major who declared that Britain wanted to be at the heart of Europe. The Maastricht Treaty had been signed in December 1991 by all the EU members, and the next two years saw rebellions escalating in number the Conservative MPs in the House of Commons, when the treaty was going through the legal process in order to be ratified by Parliament.

Major's relationship with the press became more fraught as it became apparent that criticism of Major and his government had a depressing effect on him. Political journalist and editors were informed by Conservative MPs and civil servants hostile or critical to his policies; there were leaked information and documents that often found their way to the press.⁴²¹ Kavanagh and Seldon state:

cabinet, particularly after the ERM exit, gradually ceased to be a collection of 'chums'.... Mischievous leaks increased; many were inspired by divisions on Europe, the core issue splitting his government, some by a wish to undermine John Major, and some to advance the prospects of would-be successors. By early 1993, the Eurosceptic press (*The Times* and the *Telegraph* group, as well as the *Mail* and *Sun*)

⁴¹⁹ Dennis Kavanagh and Anthony Seldon, *The Powers behind the Prime minister, and the hidden influence of number ten* (London: HarperCollins Publishers, 1999), p. 214.

⁴²⁰ Ibid., pp. 214-215.

⁴²¹ Ibid., p. 216.

seemed intent on replacing him; he complained increasingly of the 'poison' emanating from cabinet 'bastards'.⁴²²

Those who worked closely with John Major in Number Ten could report about how Major reacted during the 1990s to those forces that seemed rather hostile towards him and his government. Kavanagh and Seldon summed up the negative influences: '... the disloyalty of cabinet and parliamentary colleagues, the backbiting from Mrs Thatcher and her entourage, and the unfairness of the press.'⁴²³ Unlike his predecessor, Major seemed to worry more about negative press and criticism. His worsening relationship with journalists and editors could be seen as a consequence of 'hypersensitivity to criticisms', according to Seldon and Kavanagh.⁴²⁴ The fact that he was preoccupied with unfavourable reports in the newspapers could trigger political enemies to use this against him. One example here might be how the 'Whipless Nine' used every opportunity to ridicule the Conservative government during the period they were excluded the party whip in 1994 and 1995. They were quite eager to arrange press conferences to enlarge on the Conservative infighting in the House of Commons, with Thatcher's unreserved support.

The Conservative press turned ever more critical towards John Major. There was a huge swing from 1992 to 1995, when Major suddenly decided to resign as party leader in an attempt to unify the Conservative Party. In 1995 it was reported that the *Daily Mail* was the only Conservative newspaper that still declared their support for Major.⁴²⁵

One might discuss whether the newspapers set the agenda in the case of criticizing John Major and his government, or whether they reported the disagreement and divisions within the Conservative Party to inform the public. Another debatable issue is whether newspapers have any influence on voters in general. Hugo Young says in his book that the press is falsely assumed to speak on behalf of the public.⁴²⁶ He continues to describe Major's difficulty with the press: '... it was the perception of public opinion, and its effect on him as leader, that weakened the message he was constantly trying to get across to the Europeans.'⁴²⁷ In this particular case it might have been articulated in connection with the 'mad cow-disease'-debacle, or it could have been related to the single currency discussion.

⁴²² Ibid., p. 225.

⁴²³ Ibid., pp. 237-238.

⁴²⁴ Ibid., p. 216.

⁴²⁵ Ibid., p. 215.

⁴²⁶ Young, *This Blessed Plot*, p. 466.

⁴²⁷ Ibid.

Dennis Kavanagh and Anthony Seldon have drawn the attention to Major's fate when he took over as prime minister in 1990, seen in relation to the press coverage that he was given. They say:

It is difficult to recall any other prime minister in the post-war period who has been subject to such a bitter and sustained media attack as John Major. ... Any leader taking over from such a dominant personality as Mrs Thatcher would have suffered by comparison and a parliamentary majority of 21 at the 1992 election, cut to 15 after the Eastleigh by-election in June 1994, has not provided a platform for heroic leadership.⁴²⁸

Peter Osborne in his book *The Triumph of the Political Class* analyzes how the role of political journalists has changed during the last two decades. He refers to '... how the Political Class set out to sideline, to replace or to capture the main institutions of the state and civil society which has governed Britain in the twentieth century.'⁴²⁹ According to Osborne, 'It consciously set out to weaken representative democracy and replace it with a novel system of government offering direct engagement between the governing elite and the British people.'⁴³⁰ Osborne dismisses the claim that the function of the press has been to take on a critical role in its opposition to Parliament. The Political Class has in fact '... sought to give an almost constitutional role to the British media by building it up as an alternative to existing state institutions.'⁴³¹ His comments ought to be seen in the perspective of the huge reform process that changed the ideology and image of the Labour Party while John Major still was prime minister in the 1990s.

Since previous chapters have discussed the political influence exercised by Margaret Thatcher, the following extract is adding another perspective as to how she actually was able to attract so much attention from different media in general. Peter Osborne states:

During the final years of opposition in the mid-1990s, a large number of journalists privately put themselves at the disposal of New Labour, in many cases because they felt an ideological sympathy, in not a few cases because of a self-interested desire to ingratiate themselves with an incoming government. Often self-interest and ideological convenience coincided. Right-wing journalists who for many years had celebrated Margaret Thatcher while demonising the Labour Party, and therefore may have felt they had a great deal to prove if they were not to be starved of access by the incoming Blair regime, provide an interesting study. One Tory political commentator purchased entry to the Blair circle by handing over wholesale the contents of personal briefings from cabinet ministers to the New Labour machine. This was why in the final, dying months of the Major regime New Labour press officers were

⁴²⁸ Dennis Kavanagh and Anthony Seldon, eds., *The Major Effect* (London: Papermac an imprint of Macmillan General Books, 1994), pp. _ + x (introduction).

⁴²⁹ Peter Osborne, *The Triumph of the Political Class* (London: Simon & Schuster UK Ltd., 2007), p.233.

⁴³⁰ Ibid.

⁴³¹ Ibid., p. 234.

able to achieve the puzzling feat of providing political journalists with much more comprehensive and colourful descriptions of cabinet meetings than the official Downing Street machine.⁴³²

In other words, Margaret Thatcher's motives for seeking media attention coincided with the motives from parts of the press to voice attacks on the Conservative government in the period 1990-1997. The motives were presumably quite different, but the publication of negative and critical articles served the same aim: To weaken John Major as prime minister and to change the direction of the Conservative Party.

A few words must be said about the owners of the Conservative newspapers in this connection. Rupert Murdoch controls the *Sun*, the *Sunday Times*, *The Times*, and the *News of the World*. Another proprietor, Conrad Black, controls the *Daily Telegraph*, the *Sunday Telegraph* and the *Spectator*. The *Times*-titles and the *Telegraph*-titles represent the so-called 'quality' newspapers and are seen as the most conservative of all British newspapers. Andrew Geddes argues in his book *The European Union and British Politics* that Murdoch and Black both were expressly Eurosceptic. This has influenced politicians and has led to a more Eurosceptic attitude being expressed in order to soften up the newspaper proprietors and consequently gain a more favourable coverage in newspapers controlled by them.⁴³³ Geddes says also: 'Quality newspapers such as the *Daily Telegraph* and *The Times* have made particularly important contributions to the development of Eurosceptic thought on the right wing of politics and provided space for columnists eager to develop these new strands of Conservative thought.'⁴³⁴ By 2002 the newspaper the *Daily Mail* also was perceived to be clearly Eurosceptic, according to the Audit Bureau of Circulation.⁴³⁵ This newspaper is owned or controlled by Lord Rothermere, who is a third powerful newspaper proprietor. It could have been interesting to examine the motives of the different proprietors for their Euroscepticism; presumably the motives can differ.

5.9: Conclusion

The Europe issue dominated to a large degree the Major governments, especially after the 1992 general election. The Conservative Party had a very small majority in the House of Commons, only 21, in April 1992. Since then, due to several unfortunate circumstances for

⁴³² Ibid., p. 253.

⁴³³ Andrew Geddes, *The European Union and British Politics: Contemporary Political Studies* (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), p. 212.

⁴³⁴ Ibid., p. 219.

⁴³⁵ Ibid.

the Conservatives, this majority decreased as the years went by. The Conservative Party was dominated by a lot of in-fighting within the party itself, and Major had to resort to 'strong-arm-tactics' (votes of confidence) twice in decisive votes in order to force the rebellious Eurosceptics to close ranks and vote with the party. There were a number of organized groups in the House of Commons that collaborated to stall the ratification of the Maastricht Treaty, and later, to make their voices heard in matters regarding the single currency and the EU in general.

Margaret Thatcher's influence was seen and heard, not least after she took up a seat in the House of Lords. She directly influenced the Fresh Start group, and indirectly she influenced several other groups that were established specifically to support her ideas and to continue her fight against the enhanced political and social integration of the EU. She was emphatically against the Maastricht Treaty and the concept of a single currency. The Bruges Group, the No Turning Back Group and the Conservative Way Forward had members who were all dedicated Thatcher supporters, and Thatcher was made honorary president in two of these groups. In addition she was made honorary patron of the European Foundation.

Thatcher apparently pulled many strings behind the scene both as an MP and after she accepted a peerage to sit in the House of Lords in July 1992. Among the Lords she had some heavy-weight supporters like Norman Tebbit and Norman Lamont and Ralph Harris from 1998. Tebbit and Lamont joined in with Thatcher in their flagrant attacks on John Major's government and policies on Europe. Tebbit was very prominent in a number of pressure groups, and was able to influence debates, both within the Conservative Party and the media. The Eurosceptics John Redwood, Michael Portillo and Peter Lilley served in Major's cabinet while at the same time devoting time as members of different pressure groups, especially the No Turning Back-group.

The Conservative Party's infighting continued after the 1997 general election to the 2001 general election when the Labour Party won another landslide victory. The defeat was repeated in 2005, when Labour won a 66 seat majority in the House of Commons. Major's succeeding party leaders were all members of different Thatcherite or Eurosceptic organizations in the 1990s or later. William Hague was related to Conservative Way Forward whereas Duncan Smith was a member of No Turning Back, Conservative Way Forward, Fresh Start, the European Foundation in addition to actively engaging in the Bruges Group. Michael Howard was also a supporter of the Bruges Group and was also active in the Bow Group. These three Conservative Party leaders failed somehow to appeal to the electorate, since they did not secure enough votes in the general elections. The issue of the EU has

played a big role in this failure, in addition to other factors. After 1997 the importance of the different pressure groups outside the House of Commons seems to have decreased somewhat.

When it comes to discussing how public opinion is influenced it can be very difficult to establish the agent and the cause. During the 1990s right-wing newspapers became clearly more Eurosceptical since 'Black Wednesday' and the forced exit out of the ERM-mechanism for Britain. The economic competence of the Conservative government was perceived to be severely weakened as a result of the event. Margaret Thatcher and other Eurosceptic politicians used this to attack both the government and the planned monetary union of the EU. The former premier frequently criticized her successor and was given favourable front page headlines by editors who worked for the Eurosceptic newspaper proprietors Rupert Murdoch or Conrad Black. Apparently many of the journalists and editors working in right-wing newspapers supported Thatcher's demand for a new leader of the Conservative Party as well as different policies. Debate has not been concluded regarding newspapers' role in influencing public opinion, or whether the journalists have taken an independent role in their newspapers, setting the agenda for the debate or for criticism.

Chapter 6:

Conclusion

This dissertation has analyzed to what extent – and through what channels Margaret Thatcher has influenced the course of British politics in the twelve years following her resignation as prime minister in 1990. The empirical data provided are evaluated to decide whether the three hypotheses can be said to be true. Finally the conclusion sums up the answer to the research question.

6.1: Margaret Thatcher's influence on the Conservative Party in general and the parliamentary Conservative Party

The presented material regarding the first hypothesis revealed how Margaret Thatcher influenced backbenchers directly by supporting those who wanted to vote against the government in crucial votes over the Maastricht Treaty. After she had accepted a seat in the House of Lords, she exerted some influence behind the scenes to persuade 'Fresh Start' supporters how to vote. In addition she voiced opposition against John Major and further European integration. Her presumably biggest impact can be said to be her open display of disloyalty to the party leader and the Conservative Party. Thatcherite MPs in the House of Commons were encouraged by Thatcher to rebel. Several books and articles that have been examined in this dissertation document this influence.

Thatcher displayed a wavering attitude to the Conservative Party during the premiership of John Major. She shifted her allegiance from the Conservatives to the Referendum Party and back again. There are several reports of her praise of Tony Blair, the leader of the Labour Party – whereas she warned the electorate of the Labour Party and urged people to vote for the Conservative Party now and then. Assumedly it sent a strong signal to the electorate that she declined to support John Major and preferred the Labour candidate instead. She was even invited to Downing Street 10 after the 1997 general election to advise Blair.

Thatcher was extremely critical of her successor during the years 1990-1997. Her repeated attacks on his leadership style and his policies damaged his authority as party leader. Before the leadership contest in 1997 Thatcher voiced strong support for the Eurosceptic William Hague, and she also supported the Eurosceptic candidate in the next leadership

contest in 2001, Iain Duncan Smith. Thatcher's backing might have increased the tension within the Conservative Party and contributed to make the issue of Euroscepticism more prominent. The Conservative Party remained severely divided since this issue was promoted both before the 2001 general election and after by Hague and Duncan Smith. Whether Hague and Duncan Smith could have won the leadership without Thatcher's support in the leadership challenge has not been discussed in this dissertation. All the candidates that stood for election in 1997 and 2001 were decidedly more or less Eurosceptic, except Kenneth Clarke. If the Conservative Party had wanted to unite behind him, the result of the 1997 general election might have been different. He was an experienced politician who was popular among the electorate, but his Eurofriendly attitude made him unpopular with the Eurosceptic Conservatives in the House of Commons.

At party conferences Thatcher's presence was problematic, especially for the party chairman and the party leader in the years 1990-1997. She attracted negative publicity at several conferences because of her book publications and articles that were published. Her declared support for Augusto Pinochet probably caused some embarrassment on the party conference in 1999, although this effect is not well documented.

Peter Lilley's attempt to modernize the Conservative Party ideology inspired by Thatcher was unsuccessful, and led to several resignations from Hague's government in 1999. The issues in question were privatization and public services. Thatcher and other Tory MPs reacted furiously to what Peter Lilley suggested in his lecture. The *BBC* film *The Return of the Mummy* was very critical about Thatcher and her interventions in the Conservative Party's policy-making. Thatcher's influence on her own legacy can be questioned – it is not even likely that Thatcher was solely responsible for the continued Thatcherite ideology to govern the policies of William Hague as party leader. *The Return of the Mummy* was presumably not a film that showed Thatcher in a favourable light. The film has not been a part of the research material, so this conclusion is somewhat uncertain.

To sum up the evidence regarding the first hypothesis: The claim that Margaret Thatcher influenced the Conservative Party in general and the parliamentary Conservative Party both directly and indirectly is validated, particularly when it comes to influencing the party negatively with respect to publicity. The party division became more evident over the EU-issue, even if this was something that many others also contributed to. Thatcher's open display of disloyalty encouraged several other Eurosceptic politicians to voice their opposition. Thatcher's willingness to encourage rebellions in important divisions in the House of Commons had a devastating effect on the prime minister and his government. The

conclusion to the first hypothesis might not come as a big surprise; however, her ‘behind the scenes’ activity in the House of Commons and also the effect of her presence at party conferences has been little focused on in previous research.

6.2: Margaret Thatcher influenced public opinion through her public appearances, books and articles.

Public opinion can be said to belong to anyone – in a democracy everyone is entitled to express his or her opinion publicly. Implicitly the second hypothesis entails that Thatcher tried to influence any member of the electorate to change his political opinion or to support Thatcher’s expressed ideas. Presumably any voter should be regarded as an important target to impress; however people with power or authority are the ones who need to be persuaded in order to attract attention to new political ideas. The key persons here could be people in leading positions of large companies or organizations, journalists, advisers, ‘experts’ in various fields – in other words people that are in a prominent position to influence others.

The material available to prove Thatcher’s influence of public opinion is enormous, so the choice of speeches and articles had to be narrowed down. Thatcher’s speeches can arguably be regarded differently by different researchers. Presumably some scientists would claim that other speeches were more influential or caused more debate. Whether it was the Thatcher Foundation or Margaret Thatcher herself that categorized some of her speeches ‘key speeches’, is unclear.⁴³⁶ They could have been chosen for specific reasons, for instance to show the eloquence of Thatcher, or they could have been selected because they had the biggest audiences. However, there is a possibility that some speeches were highlighted because they caused a lot of debate and thus potentially influenced many people. Thatcher’s The Hague-speech was seen quite controversial because of its focus on the enhanced role of a united Germany within the EU. The speech could have led to a difficult diplomatic climate for John Major as prime minister in 1992, because he already had strained the goodwill of the other EU members when Britain demanded an opt-out of the social chapter and the single currency before the Maastricht Treaty was signed in December 1991.

The timing of the CNN-speech and the ‘fresh start’-EDM in the House of Commons could be regarded as a coincidence, since these events happened only days apart. It can also be claimed that Thatcher’s CNN-speech prompted the EDM regarding a demand for a fresh start for the Maastricht Treaty. The issue was very contentious, and the debate that followed

⁴³⁶ The Margaret Thatcher Foundation was set up by Margaret Thatcher in 1991.

in the House of Commons was bound to be extremely difficult for John Major and the Conservative Party anyway since it was the first debate after 'Black Wednesday' when Britain had to leave the ERM-mechanism. Since the Conservative Party only had a small majority in the House of Commons after the 1992 general election, the huge support of an EDM signalled opposition to the government's policies. The speech might have triggered debate and opposition in the House of Commons.

The next two selected speeches, the Prague speech and the Keith Joseph Memorial Lecture, both attracted a lot of attention because of their content. The Prague speech was seen to be fundamentally negative to the EU, and Thatcher talked about her nightmare vision of a European federal superstate. The Keith Joseph Memorial Lecture led to a public debate about the future of the British welfare state. It also discussed the future ideology of the Conservative Party. Major's 'One Nation' ideology was ridiculed by Margaret Thatcher, who claimed that this was more like a 'No Nation' ideology instead. Major's authority as party leader was challenged.

The Plymouth election rally speech in 2001 could have become a publicity disaster, if Thatcher's allegedly racist remark in an interview on the day of the speech had been broadcast. The tumultuous discussions that took place involving several prominent MPs before her appearance at the election rally can be taken as proof of her potential liability to the party.

Margaret Thatcher did exert some positive influence in Hong Kong before the colony was returned to the Chinese in 1997. Everything was carried out in accordance with Chris Patten, the British governor in Hong Kong, and prime minister John Major. Her personal visit and assurances helped solve a diplomatic knot. Thatcher also proved to be a positive influence for British firms in several Asian countries, by attracting publicity and encouraging contracts. This was carried out on an informal basis, and the effect might not have been achieved if Thatcher had stayed in Britain. The political influence here might be negligible since it has not been mentioned by anyone else than John Campbell in his book *Margaret Thatcher. Volume Two: The Iron Lady*.

Thatcher's own books resulted in a lot of publicity for Thatcher's views. *The Downing Street Years* was very critical to Major and his government, in addition to most of Thatcher's former colleagues. The party conference in 1993 was negatively influenced when the book was published just as the conference week started. *The Path to Power* in 1995 encouraged Conservative MPs to contest the party leadership of John Major. It was not necessarily the book alone that contributed to the surprise resignation of Major, but potentially the book

proved to be the last straw for him. He declared 'put up or shut up' to his critics and won the leadership contest, however, his authority was not restored. This authority might have decreased both within the party and among the electorate.

Thatcher's third book, *Statecraft*, which was published in 2002, questioned Britain's membership of the EU. Thatcher talked about Britain on the point of no return. Her views seemed to offend many members of the Conservative Party and they were considered to be more populist than ever. Constituency chairmen declared that this time she had gone too far, and Thatcher was indirectly attacked for being xenophobic and nationalistic by Conservative MP Francis Maude. Thatcher was prohibited from taking part in further public discussions because of her declining health.

The three selected articles written by Thatcher were published in *The European*, *Newsweek* and the *New York Times*; all of them in 1992. The first had a disastrous effect on the party conference, since it was timed to coincide with this. Both Major, the government and the Maastricht Treaty were attacked, and the potential positive publicity in the mass media about the conference disappeared. A few months earlier, in April, the *Newsweek* article was published which attacked both John Major and his government. This happened shortly after the general election, and the Conservative Party had a precarious majority in the House of Commons. The difficult debates for the ratification of the Maastricht Treaty were under way, and the first serious rebellion took place in May, when the government was defeated by Tory rebels. The third article in *New York Times* about Bosnia might have helped to highlight the plight of the Bosnians. Another interpretation might be that Thatcher interfered in Britain's foreign policy, and forced John Major and foreign secretary Douglas Hurd to participate in a public debate about Britain's role in this conflict.

The last proofs regarding Thatcher's influence on public opinion stem from the repeated front page headlines that Thatcher was able to make. Her anger and bitterness with John Major and his policies were given prominent coverage in the Eurosceptic newspapers that apparently agreed with Thatcher; otherwise the headlines might be said to attract more readers and also create publicity in other media, for instance television.

To sum up the evidence regarding the second hypothesis: Thatcher's initiatives to influence public opinion were numerous, and the claim that she did exert influence is validated. The different speeches, books, articles, newspaper reports and interviews took place outside Parliament, but on close inspection this indirectly influenced her party colleagues in Parliament. Many of Thatcher's initiatives can be interpreted as agenda-setting in the public debate – with headlines on the front pages of newspapers or with television interviews.

Indirectly the public esteem for the Conservative Party might have been severely damaged, with all the displays of criticism and party division. Thatcher's books and articles seemed to have had profound influence on how the party was perceived in mass media, although this can not be said to be proven in this dissertation.

6.3: Margaret Thatcher's influence on Eurosceptic organizations contributed to increased Euroscepticism in Britain in the 1990s

Margaret Thatcher's ideas were explicitly the motivation for the foundation of the Bruges Group (BG), the No Turning Back group (NTB) and the Conservative Way Forward (CWF) group. The Fresh Start group (FS) did not want a ratification of the Maastricht Treaty in the House of Commons, or a single currency imposed on Britain as a result of this treaty. This group enjoyed the direct support from Thatcher before the important divisions, when Thatcher egged all Eurosceptics to rebel and vote against the government. The European Foundation (a think-tank) and the Referendum Party were against further European integration or for a referendum regarding the single currency in Britain. The BG shared Thatcher's Eurosceptic views, whereas the NTB group and the CWF supported several of Thatcher's values and ideas, not only against closer European integration.

Many of the Conservative MPs and peers were simultaneously members of the same Eurosceptic organizations or think-tanks. They were supported by several networks that shared many of the same ideas regarding the EU, even though their motivation for doing so could be very different from one group to another. Several of these groups were directly inspired by Thatcher when they were established; others were able to attract her support directly or indirectly, for instance by offering her an honorary office as patron or honorary president. Then the Eurosceptic MPs could meet with members of the different organizations for instance in different advisory committees in the House of Commons. Several of these groups had resourceful members who studied all aspects of different EU-matters in great detail and proved to voice strong resistance based on thorough research of the EU organizations.

Right-wing Eurosceptic newspapers also contributed to the Eurosceptic cause, together with Margaret Thatcher and many other Conservative politicians. The fact that influential and powerful newspaper proprietors like Rupert Murdoch and Conrad Black were decidedly Eurosceptic, probably also was important for how different editors and journalists faced the

question of the EU and how the different EU organizations were described in relation to Britain's interests.

To sum up the last chapter: The research material for this chapter was found to be quite sparse or difficult to obtain. Since this chapter mainly deals with indirect influence from Thatcher on several Eurosceptic organizations and think-tanks, the conclusions have to be drawn with caution. There is no doubt that the issue of further integration of Britain and the rest of the EU members played a fairly important role during the 1990s and the first half of the next decade in British politics and especially for the Conservative Party. However, Thatcher's influence on the Bruges Group and the Conservative Way Forward is easier to establish than on other think-tanks or groups. Some of the groups mentioned above seem to have been influential in the House of Commons whenever the debates were about EU-related matters, especially during the Major governments in the 1990s. This seems to be especially the case of the Fresh Start group and the parliamentary Friends of Bruges group.

Whether some newspapers supported Thatcher because she was critical to the Major government or because she did not want further EU integration is an open question. Some newspapers shifted their allegiance just before or after the 1997 general election to support the Labour Party (as for instance the *Sun* did). The Labour Party seemed to be less Eurosceptic than the Conservative Party in the 1990s. The role of the newspapers, however, is far from clear-cut. The potential political influence is a debatable issue which was only very briefly discussed in this dissertation.

The reasons for increased Euroscepticism in Britain in the 1990s can be attributed to a variety of factors. Eurosceptic politicians and others had different reasons for their scepticism. Margaret Thatcher was not alone in her Eurosceptic views; there were several other prominent politicians who fought against further European integration, not least in the Thatcherite and Eurosceptic organizations that were discussed in chapter 5. The evidence for the third hypothesis does to a certain degree support the stated claim, but it seems that many aspects related to increased Euroscepticism have not been discussed thoroughly enough to validate the claim.

6.4: Final comments

The research question was: *To what extent – and through what channels – did Margaret Thatcher influence the course of British politics in the twelve years following her resignation as Prime minister in 1990?* It appears that Margaret Thatcher was very active during her twelve years since her resignation in order to influence public opinion as well as the Conservative Party. A selection of her speeches and articles set the agenda in newspapers and television programmes, and consequently can be said to have a fairly huge influence on public opinion. Her books had some profound influence on events in the Conservative Party, and her intervention in the leadership elections helped the Eurosceptic candidates William Hague in 1997 and Iain Duncan Smith in 2001.

Arguably there were other possible alternatives of exerting political influence for Thatcher when she resigned. She could for instance have established her own political party instead of being accused of trench warfare within the Conservative Party. This dissertation could have examined the substance of her speeches and articles in order to analyze whether her ideas contributed to influence the political content of the party manifestos in the years after her resignation. Thatcher's influence on other Eurosceptic Conservatives could have been more thoroughly discussed. The influence might also have come from other sceptics and given Thatcher the arguments that she used in many of the speeches that she gave. This dissertation has not been able to provide a complete discussion on this theme.

Thatcher's unique position as former prime minister qualified her to continue a political life after her resignation, and her vast network gave her opportunities to travel all over the world advocating her political views. Her role as a destabilizing force in the Conservative Party might have influenced the general decreased support for party political membership and a lower turn-out in general elections. This responsibility is by no means Thatcher's alone, but her frequent attacks on her successor and on the government's policies might have led to in-party fighting which attracted a lot of media publicity, but repulsed voters in general.

Thatcher contributed to a debate in the party about the welfare state in addition to the increasingly divisive question of the EU and its aims of political and monetary union. The end-note in the last controversy that she caused was accusations directed at Thatcher for being xenophobic and nationalistic. Then she was forced to retire from the public debate on the doctor's orders.

The concluding answer to the research question is that Margaret Thatcher influenced the course of British politics in the twelve years following her resignation in 1990 to a great extent directly through her books, articles, speeches, party conference participation, television interviews and indirectly through media coverage and Thatcherite or Eurosceptic organizations. The discussion of important concepts, as for instance 'influence' and 'politics', constitutes a crucial part of the dissertation. Some newspaper proprietors, and the journalists and editors working for them, seemed to sympathize with Margaret Thatcher and her political views in the 1990s, and gave her a chance to attract attention through headlines and front-page coverage. This was especially true in the years before the 1997 general election, when the Conservative Party was heavily defeated by the Labour Party after 18 years in government.

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